



**Teachers' experiences of implementing the English Home  
Language Curriculum in Grade four**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

In the endeavour of the South African government to democratise and provide an all-inclusive education system, its transformative curricula had been amended many times from the initial curriculum change of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), to the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The changing curriculum policy has impacted the English curriculum, leaving English Home Language (EHL) teachers with the task of adapting and implementing these changes. The national EHL curriculum, however, did not account for different educational contexts that could impede the implementation process – factors such as inadequate training of teachers, or the poor spoken and written English of second language learners.

In this study, a qualitative approach, underpinned by the Interpretivist and Constructivist Paradigms, was employed to explore teachers' experiences of implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade four. A case study method was used to collect data from purposively selected participants, namely, six Grade four teachers. The three participating public primary schools in the study, were situated in the Umlazi District, Durban, South Africa. The main data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview conducted with each participant.

The Conceptual Framework comprising ten components in the Curricula Spider Web (Berkvens, Van den Akker, & Brugman, 2014) framed this study, and was used as a lens to explore Grade four EHL teachers' experiences particularly in implementing the curriculum. In addition, the Curricula Spider Web underpinned by the three curriculum levels of what is *Intended*, *Implemented* and *Attained*, were used as a guide to formulate the interview questions and analyse the data. From the participants' responses, common themes were summarised and reported through the method of content analysis. Besides the theme of challenges teachers faced in implementing the EHL curriculum, other emerging themes included: insufficient time for the volume of content in the curriculum which relates to what is intended by the policy and too many assessments which pertains to the attainment of curriculum goals as specified in EHL curriculum.

The data suggests that EHL teachers were challenged with bridging the policy divisions between Intention, Implementation and Attainment of curriculum outcomes. Participants offered practical recommendations such as, a gradual progression of content in EHL between the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase as the adjustment for both teachers and learners are considerable. In addition, participants suggested obtaining sustained support from the Department of Education with regard to proper curriculum training and assistance from subject advisors in order to help lighten their curriculum load.

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To my supervisor Dr Pryah Mahabeer - Thank you for pushing me to excel. I can confidently say that it not only grew me intellectually but as a person as well.

## **DECLARATION**

**I, Tracy Lee Williams, hereby declare that:**

- i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii) This dissertation does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs, or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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## **SUPERVISOR'S ENDORSEMENT**

As the candidate's supervisor I agree/do not agree to the submission of this thesis.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement	CAPS
English Home Language	EHL
Department of Education	DoE
Heads of Education Departments Committee	HEDCOM
Council of Education Ministers	CEM
Outcomes Based Education	OBE
National Curriculum Statement	NCS
Revised National Curriculum Statement	RNCS
United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation	UNESCO
Natural Science	NS
Social Science	SS

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## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction to the Study**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The apartheid era in South Africa created an unjust and unequal society. Therefore, the advent of democracy in 1994 brought about great changes in society as attempts were made to transform society to a fair and equal one (Jansen, 1998). Education, which was one of the most unequal basic needs of our society, went through several structural and curriculum changes (Maodzwa–Taruvunga & Cross, 2012). The promises of change in education curriculum however, soon exposed serious challenges in implementation as the remnants of apartheid in terms of unequal resources, poverty in communities, and improperly trained teachers continued to limit learner achievement (Spaull, 2015).

Given the apartheid system's unequal emphasis on developing English, especially in black, rural schools (Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996), and the movement of these children after democracy to urban schools in which many use English as their main language of instruction (Msila, 2005), the implementation of the English Home Language (EHL) curriculum has met several challenges. Thus, this study explores how Grade four teachers implement the EHL curriculum in terms of what is mandated by the EHL policy. In this chapter, the background of the government's intention regarding the curriculum is explained, the rationale for the study is described, and an annotated discussion on the research methodology employed is given. Identifying the gap in the research space is briefly discussed through international and national studies and is elaborated in the Literature review, and highlights the need for this study. The location of the study provides an insight into the context of the study and the purpose of the study follows. Research methods are elaborated to encapsulate the process from data collection to data analysis. Finally, ethical issues and a preview to the ensuing chapters is explained.

### **1.2 Background**

The background of the study describes the intention of the South African education Ministry to introduce a comprehensive curriculum for all teachers to follow. In the foreword of the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)* document (DoE, 2011), the Minister of Basic Education at that time, Angie Motshekga, presented an idealistic vision of the role of the new national curriculum in keeping with the ethos of the Constitution (South Africa. Act 108,

1997). CAPS aimed at bringing about cohesiveness through a term-by-term plan in a single document for each subject (DoE, 2011). However, fundamental contextual factors were underplayed. These contextual factors included school management efficacy, years of teaching experience, socio economic backgrounds, under-resourced schools, language proficiency of learners etc. a few considerations which play a huge role in determining the success or failure of a curriculum (Pretorius, 2014) and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

### **1.2.1 Statement of the problem and focus of the study**

Given the challenges teachers were experiencing in implementing the EHL curriculum, a National Curriculum and Assessment Task Team was established in 2017 to address issues raised by teachers, subject specialists and parents regarding curriculum implementation. The first challenge on the agenda in the Problem Statement (DoE, 2018) was poor curriculum coverage due to curriculum content overload including the range of problems with assessments which are directly linked to the focus of this research topic. The interest in this study also arose from the challenging experiences the researcher has encountered as an EHL teacher in terms of implementing large volumes of work within restricted time frames to second language learners. The concerns by teachers of curriculum overload were put forward to the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM) and taken further to the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) on 09 November 2017. Short, medium, and long-term plans were initiated to improve suggestions by various committees. The extent to which these suggestions were implemented is related to the research being undertaken. A possible benefit of this study is to assist EHL teachers in understanding and improving the way they implement the curriculum.

## **1.3 Rationale**

This section describes the personal, contextual, and scholastic motivations for the study.

### **1.3.1 Personal motivation**

As an English teacher for the past 20 years, I have experienced many curriculum changes. After the epic failure of Outcomes Based Education (Jansen, 1997) and curriculum revisions thereafter, through the National Curriculum Statement, and the Revised National Curriculum Statement, CAPS seemed to have been the answer to past curricula challenges. However, the EHL curriculum through its detailed outline of what was expected, made it more challenging

when it came to implementation. The study is thus impelled by from the experiences of the researcher as an EHL teacher who was faced with large volumes of work and restricted time frames under CAPS.

### **1.3.2 Contextual factors**

Msibi and Mchunu (2013) argued that while CAPS superficially noted that teachers were not compelled to rigidly adhere to the cycles in the document, any deviation from what was prescribed was almost impossible since all content was expected to be covered at the same time across the country. This prescription then placed undue stress on teachers to comply nationally with implementing the plan prescribed for EHL curriculum regardless of context. As a teacher in the context of the above stipulations, the researcher is able to provide anecdotal evidence of the impact of the context on EHL curriculum implementation.

### **1.3.3 Scholastic motivations**

In this section, key terms used in the research topic will be unpacked and the meaning of teachers' experiences and reasons for choosing Grade four will be explained. This will be followed by different perspectives of the term curriculum as well as the relationship between EHL curriculum and implementation.

#### **1.3.3.1 Conceptualising English Home Language teachers' pedagogical experiences**

*Pedagogy* is a term often used in educational settings and is sometimes synonymous with teaching that includes teaching practice, instruction and teaching procedures (Loughran, 2013). Loughran (2013) explains that pedagogy is not confined to teaching which narrowly viewed, is misinterpreted as the transmission of information. Therefore, this misconception (Loughran, 2013), explains why the EHL curriculum theoretically appears to be so straightforward, where the teacher merely follows a syllabus. Loughran (2013) further explains pedagogy as the relationship between teaching and learning through meaningful practice; which underpins the focus of this study - what are EHL teachers' experiences in the classroom in attempting to effectively implement the EHL curriculum?

### **1.3.3.2 Relationship between English Home Language curriculum policy and implementation**

The mediator between policy and implementation is the teacher who rolls out the pedagogical process. Stenhouse (1975), a seminal theorist who had a lasting impact in the field of curriculum development, recognised that there were two perspectives regarding curriculum, which are still appropriate. Firstly, curriculum was viewed as a prescription or intention of what one hopes to realise in schools as intended by the EHL curriculum, in contrast to what actually happens in the classroom as implemented by EHL teachers. Similarly, this debate between policy and practice according to Thijs and Akker (2009) suggested that an effective curriculum is dependent on the distinction between curriculum implementation and the way it was intended. This argument (Thijs & Akker, 2009) focuses the attention on the disconnection between practical contextual realities for EHL teachers, and policy vision as alluded to in CAPS; a key contention that impels this study.

### **1.4 Highlighting the importance of this study**

A plethora of studies have been done on Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement in general, while others have focused on specific subjects. The interrogation of the research literature reveals the following: Nkosi (2014) explored teachers' experiences of implementing CAPS in three primary schools in KwaZulu Natal while (Zano & Maphalala, 2015) looked at Grade eleven teachers' enactment of CAPS in Free State Province schools; (Malapo, 2016) aimed at understanding how Grade three educators in the Limpopo province implemented CAPS. Ramatlapana and Makonye (2012) tracked how much leeway teachers' have concerning their experience from National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to the present curricula (CAPS) – their data revealed the context to actually be restrictive. The literature reveals that research has also focused on other subjects besides English Home Language under CAPS (Nhlongo, 2015; Nkohla, 2016; Gudyanga & Jita, 2018). For example, Nhlongo (2015) focused on Foundation Phase teachers' experiences of teaching Physical Education in Life Skills in under resourced schools; Nkohla (2016) paid particular attention to Agricultural Sciences and teachers' reflections on their practices under CAPS; Gudyanga and Jita (2018) surveyed the concerns of eighty one Physical Science teachers with the implementation of CAPS. In addition to the national studies mentioned herein above, international studies on



English teaching were also conducted, however, there appears to be a dearth of research on the implementation of EHL in Grade four.

Studies on teaching English in other countries are also popular in terms of research (Garton, 2014; Ramírez Romero, Sayer, & Pamplón Irigoyen, 2014; Wang & Kokotsaki, 2018). Garton (2014) reviewed the challenges faced by English primary school teachers in implementing the curriculum in South Korea. Ramírez Romero, Sayer, and Pamplón Irigoyen (2014) discussed teaching and implementing English as a foreign language in Mexican primary schools as a tool to right the wrongs of injustice. Wang and Kokotsaki (2018) also explored teaching English as a foreign language in Chinese primary schools adding to the volume of studies on English teaching. The studies reviewed concern the implementation of CAPS or teaching English to second language learners, but are not directly related to understanding teachers' experiences of implementing EHL in Grade four classes, which again highlights a scarcity of research and presents the researcher with an opportunity to explore this phenomenon.

Zimmerman and Smit (2014) found that teachers presume that Grade four learners can decode language with the information-processing skills they possess. This presumption, coupled with the urgency of teachers to complete the syllabus due to the monitoring of results on South African Schools Administration Management Systems (SASAMS) programme, worsens the situation as teachers are under pressure to complete the syllabus at any cost. Ramatlapana and Makonye (2012) asserted that CAPS is so prescriptive that its implementation demands uniformity through strict monitoring by government officials, and thus strips teachers of their autonomy. This section highlighted national studies carried out on CAPS reviewing the curriculum as a whole, some studies focused on specific subjects in CAPS and other studies briefly listed experiences of English teachers' abroad. However, research related to the study of English teachers' implementing EHL in Grade 4 presents a gap in the research space which therefore prompted the need for this study.

### **1.5 Location of the study**

This study is located at three public primary schools in close proximity to one another in the Umlazi District, Durban, South Africa. School A, in the research study has very poor learners who come from an informal settlement a kilometre away. School B, has better schooling facilities and caters to a set of more racially and culturally diverse learners. School C, has

largely isiZulu speaking learners who are transported from township communities. The school actually has less than ten first language English learners. These schools were purposively selected as they all offer EHL. The diverse contexts with regard to language proficiency of learners, socio-economic backgrounds, facilities, and other factors, enables the researcher to gain a broader perspective into teachers' experiences in Grade four, in different contexts.

## **1.6 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand Grade four teachers' experiences of implementing EHL curriculum to learners' who are transitioning from the Foundation Phase, (Grade 3) to the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4).

## **1.7 Research question to be asked**

The following research question outlines the objective of the study and informs the methodology used: *What are English Teachers' experiences with implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade 4?*

## **1.8 Research methods**

### **1.8.1 Research design**

The research design in this study is qualitative since it is a means of exploring a phenomenon that requires further exploration (Creswell, 2014) which in this study is teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum in Grade four. This research design is aligned with the Interpretivist and Constructivist paradigms as it is a way of making meaning of social and educational phenomenon through dialogic discourse (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2013) concur that Interpretivist and Constructivist researchers can discover multiple social realities through participants' views, backgrounds and experiences. Both the qualitative research design and Interpretivist and Constructivist research paradigms are appropriate for the study because this exploration aims at understanding the meaning of different Grade four teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum.

### **1.8.2 Methodology**

The methodology chosen is a case study. Case studies focus on a bounded context, and use various sources of data, to ensure an in-depth enquiry. The case study methodology employed in this study is appropriate to glean information from the participants, and provides the opportunity to explain, describe or explore the phenomenon being researched (Yin, 2014). In this research a more specific, instrumental case study is used. Instrumental case studies explore a more general issue – in this case, teachers’ experiences, to gain a broader understanding of a phenomenon of how they implement the EHL curriculum (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In a case study researchers hope to gain in-depth meaning and understanding of participants and their situations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016), which is relevant to the study being undertaken. In case studies, data may be collected by diverse methods, and in this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The methodology will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.8.3 Data collection**

A common method of data collection in case studies are interviews or semi-structured interviews (Holloway & Galvin, 2016). An interview schedule with a set of questions was employed by the researcher to conduct the interview process. Semi-structured interviews were used as they provide structure and direction to the interview, but simultaneously allows room for spontaneity (Berg, 2009). In contrast, impersonal alternatives like questionnaires or structured interviews are formal and do not allow for probing in order to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewee’s first hand experiences.

The flexibility in using semi-structured interviews enabled the interviewer to probe further about teachers’ experiences of EHL based on responses from the interviewee through open-ended questions. Turner (2010) concurs that open-ended questions were rather popular in interviews and allowed participants to fully express their experiences. Another advantage of interviews is that an interviewer is able to interact one-on-one with the participant and observe his or her body language (Cohen et al., 2011). Given that this research sought the meanings and understandings Grade four teachers make of their experiences of the EHL curriculum, the semi-structured interview was most suitable as a data collection instrument.

#### **1.8.4 Sampling and sampling methods**

Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, and Nigam, (2013) describe three techniques when choosing participants: purposive, convenience or snow ball sampling which is discussed further in Chapter 3. In this study, purposive sampling was used to specifically include six Grade four teachers involved in implementing the Grade four EHL curriculum.

A key factor in determining sample size, is the purpose of the study (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). As this is a small-scale study, a small sample from each context was sufficient to explore the phenomenon under scrutiny. This qualitative study comprised only six participants and produced data that would be easily analysed and managed (Kelley et al., 2003). Three participants were selected from School B, two from School A and one from School C depending on their consent to participate in the research study. Mouton (2001) focused on providing an in-depth description using a smaller number of participants who were not necessarily chosen because they represented a larger group. Rather participants were selected because they could offer vital information regarding the phenomenon allowing for a more analytical approach as in this case.

#### **1.8.5 Data analysis methods**

Drawing meaning from the analysis of data means that the researcher must carefully scrutinise the findings to avoid misinterpretations in other words, to make sense of the data from the participants perspective (Cohen et al., 2011). According to Vithal and Jansen (2012) data analysis involved scanning and cleaning the data, organising the data and re-presenting the data, the details of which will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, content analysis which is used to analyse the transcribed textual data and uncover common themes (Creswell, 2014) was employed by the researcher.

#### **1.8.6 Trustworthiness**

Triangulation is a multi-method approach or reinforcement wherein the researcher seeks to validate their findings of the phenomenon through two or more methods (Cohen et al., 2011) thus expanding the capacity to generate knowledge. Although one method was opted for, that is, semi-structured interviews, the use of six participants provided multiple sources of data to

provide a richer source of information. To determine if the evidence for the reported results were sound, trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability needed to be established (Yilmaz, 2013). These four concepts are discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this study.

### **1.8.7 Ethics**

Ethics involves a code of conduct and as a researcher one has a responsibility to uphold, respect and prioritise the participants' welfare (Flick, 2014). Two pertinent factors that were addressed prior to commencement were informed consent and confidentiality. Informed consent is when a participant freely chooses to participate in the study having full disclosure of the relevant information such as the purpose for the study and the benefits thereof (Cohen et al., 2011). Confidentiality ensures the anonymity of the participant, and allows for trust, thus putting the participants' reservations at ease. Proper protocol in ethical research was strictly adhered by obtaining the appropriate permissions in writing from the university, principals of schools and the participants. One of the fundamental characteristics of a researcher must be integrity, and this underscores the fact that there is no place for any deception on the part of the researcher (Bassey, 1999).

### **1.9 Preview of chapters**

Chapter 1 is an introduction that explains how political changes in South Africa gave rise to drastic curriculum changes thus, having a lasting impact on curriculum implementation. The background and rationale which provides a general overview of the study is presented and the importance of this study is detailed by providing Literature from international and national sources, in which a gap in the research has been identified, namely, Grade 4 teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum. A description of the location is explained and the purpose of the study is outlined. Chapter 1 provides a synopsis of the entire study, viz., background, rationale, research methodology, data analysis and results.

Okoli and Schabram (2010) encouraged synthesising existing knowledge with previous work to critique or support the researcher's phenomenon. Therefore, in Chapter 2 international and national research are reviewed and interrogated. Chapter 2 looks at the insights of EHL Teachers' experiences of the Intended, Implemented and Attained Curriculum using the

Curricula Spider Web as a Conceptual Framework. One of the main aims of this chapter is to provide relevant literature regarding discourses and contentions for this study.

In an attempt to answer the critical research question, Chapter 3 explicates the research design and methodology. The qualitative design approach, linked to the Constructivist and Interpretivist Paradigm is included to highlight the researcher's intention to understand the participants' socially constructed realities and the methodology employed, is case study. A data roll out plan in terms of the data collection, sampling and data analysis is described and issues of trustworthiness and ethics are listed. Finally, Limitations and delimitations of this study concludes this chapter.

Chapter 4 provides a presentation and analysis of data through the semi-structured interviews. Through the collected data, common themes which relate to the three curriculum levels in the Conceptual Framework is extracted. This chapter expounds on EHL teachers experiences of the Intended, Implemented and Attained curriculum in their various contexts. Data analysis reveals that both teachers and learners were negatively impacted by curriculum's expectations, in particular arising from content overload in EHL and restricted time frames. The findings ensuing from the data addresses the key phenomenon thereby answering the research question: *What are English Teachers' experiences with implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade 4?*

In attaining rich data from Chapter 4, Chapter 5 summarises the chapters and outlines the themes that emerge from Chapter 4. Drawing from the data, recommendations based on the reflections by the participants on their teaching experiences, is discussed. Through this undertaking, the researcher suggests other potential research studies which could be pursued.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

Chapter 1 provides a synopsis of this dissertation and describes governments' endeavor to democratise the curriculum to allow the previously disadvantaged to enjoy an unbiased and fair curriculum. The challenges arising from these attempts are summarised in this Chapter, which points to a dearth of studies attempting to explore what English Teachers experience with implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade 4. This gap impelled the researcher to undertake the study motivated by personal and research reasons. The Research

methodology was briefly explained and noted that further elaboration would follow in Chapter 3. Ethical issues were discussed followed by a preview of the chapters.

In the next chapter, research literature is interrogated to examine the status of the current ideas in EHL implementation, and the relevance, contentions and limitations of such studies discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 1, a contextualisation of this study was presented. A synopsis of the research focus, rationale and research questions that impel this study was discussed, followed by an overview of the dissertation. In this chapter, the current discourses and contentions that emerge in existing research about curriculum, and teacher experiences in curriculum implementation, is interrogated. Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, and Walker (2018) assert that knowing what studies already exists and where there is a gap is crucial in guiding one's own research.

Thus, Chapter 2 scrutinises the main terminologies and key ideas related to the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2014) and draws on literature from multiple sources internationally and nationally to explore teachers' experiences in implementing the EHL curriculum. In Chapter 2 the history of past and present curricula regarding English is discussed and its influence on teachers' experiences in implementing the curriculum. A distinction is drawn between English Home Language and English First Additional Language and highlights the researcher's choice in pursuing English Home Language as a focus of this study. The Curricula Spider Web (Berkvens, Van den Akker, & Brugman, 2014, p. 8) including its ten components within the three curriculum levels and its relevance to this study is also detailed. Through the discussion in this chapter, the divide that prevails between policy and practice as well as a gap in the understanding specifically of Grade four teachers' experiences in the implementation of EHL curriculum is revealed.

### **2.2 Understanding curriculum and curriculum implementation**

In order to understand Teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum in Grade four, an understanding of curriculum and what it entails is unpacked. While there are myriad definitions for the term *curriculum* (Van den Akker, 2010), the original source of the word can assist to authenticate the meaning. *Curriculum* is a Latin term which metaphorically refers to a journey or a race. The traditional definitions of curriculum refer to the development and implementation of policy documents and its cascading to schools in the form of syllabi and teaching plans, from education departments in the government. One of the most influential philosophers and researchers on contemporary curriculum issues is Pinar. Pinar (2012)



strongly voiced his disdain with bureaucratic protocols which he criticised as contradictory. On the one hand, teachers were being held accountable, while simultaneously disabling them by reducing teachers to mere technicians when implementing the curriculum. Although Pinar's study was contextually situated in the United States of America, emerging from a time of social unrest, the analogy illustrated of teachers as *technicians* (Pinar, 2012) emphasised the role of public school teachers who were forced to perpetuate the mess and bureaucratic demands that the political history had inflicted upon the schools system. Pinar (2012) interrogates the real role of teachers within a reconceptualist framework of curriculum – are they to be implementers of bureaucratic demands, or are they meant to be intellectuals who explore and interrogate the curriculum beyond its narrowly demarcated prescriptions and procedures coming from a government policy document?

A parallel can be drawn with South Africa's troubled history that also impacted greatly on its post-apartheid curricula. In an attempt to correct the damage from the apartheid past through a transformation of the curriculum to a more democratic and inclusive one where the embedded bias and discriminatory ideas of race, gender and culture were removed, several revisions of the curriculum took place, which impacted upon teachers implementation in the classroom, and caused much uncertainty and distress for teachers (Lizer, 2013). The historical changes of curriculum resulting in the eventual CAPS document and the repercussions of this on the experiences of Grade four teachers in implementing the EHL curriculum is thus relevant to this study. In the following section, the state of curriculum research internationally will be discussed.

### **2.3 International studies on curriculum and curriculum implementation**

This section compares Turkey, South Africa and the Netherlands with regards to curriculum implementation. To implement the EHL curriculum successfully there must be a good plan in place, yet flexible and accommodating. De Clercq (2013) asserted that due to the nature of CAPS, less competent teachers would become increasingly dependent on the curriculum by merely following its detailed plan irrespective of outcomes. In contrast, the competent teachers want to maintain their autonomy to avoid frustration, again going back to the chasm between intention and implementation.

In a qualitative study carried out in Turkey, Ozturk (2011) found that teachers implement the curriculum at a micro-level so they appropriately understand the needs and capabilities of their learners. Ironically however, in Turkey teachers are said to have the least autonomy in curriculum freedom as the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has drafted a 'one size fits all' system, as is the case in our country with CAPS. Ozturk (2011) study dealt with History in secondary schools but it pointed out that the most common complaint from teachers was that the intensive content in the curriculum presented difficulties in closing the gap between classroom realities and National curriculum requirements, which resonates with this study concerning ELH curriculum policy versus the implementation thereof.

In Netherlands from where the conceptual framework is derived, curriculum implementation is at the opposite end of the spectrum when compared to Turkey and South Africa. In a striking contrast to South Africa, schools in the Netherlands are allowed more flexibility in adapting the educational policy to suit their particular context (Thijs & Akker, 2009). For example, schools draw on content specific to their needs and this promotes synergy amongst relevant stakeholders such as curriculum developers and teachers. Therefore, the teachers' roles become vital in curriculum innovation, unlike South African schools, where teachers are merely following educational protocol. Hoadley and Jansen (2009) added that education should be more liberal, allowing teachers to be open-minded when considering a programme tailored for themselves and their learners. The suggestion by Hoadley and Jansen (2009) of teachers being a part of decision making when it comes to their teaching context can be a positive stride toward understanding the needs of their learners and working from that vantage point, a suggestion that needs research and discussion in the South African curriculum context.

## **2.4 Curriculum research in the South African context**

Bernstein (2003) has played an influential role in the South African research context in terms of classroom based pedagogy. Structuring of text, time, space are features within the Bernsteinian framework and pedagogy explores the relationship between how knowledge is organised and how that knowledge is transmitted. Research carried out using the Bernsteinian framework was done by Hoadley (2017) in which a qualitative, ethnographic case study was conducted in primary schools in a poor community outside Cape Town. Hoadley (2017) emphasised the significant part teachers played as mediators between curriculum and implementation, especially in reading and numeracy at foundational levels in changing

contexts. Similarly, this study addresses the experiences of English teachers' as mediators in the curriculum. In the sub sections that follow, curriculum developments from the Apartheid era to CAPS will be discussed, and the impact the different transitions had on education particularly concerning the teaching of English. In discussing the disparate curricula contexts, a sense of the challenges both teachers and learners experienced through these policy changes is gleaned. The importance of this historical analyses is to have an idea of how the country's past in enforcing unfair language policies has left lasting repercussions on the understanding and implementation of the EHL curriculum.

#### **2.4.1 The changing English curriculum from Apartheid to CAPS**

This section looks at the role of English as a medium of instruction in executing the government's political initiatives. As early as 1948, segregation and inequality through the government's system was being established. Mother-tongue medium of instruction was used as the language of learning and teaching in Black primary schools and English and Afrikaans followed as a medium of instruction in secondary schools (Granville et al., 1998). This powerful political strategy not only divided Black people along apartheid lines but further disadvantaged Black learners in English proficiency. By the time the Bantu Education Act was introduced in 1953, the differences in racially divided education systems had become entrenched (Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996). In spite of the language disparities amongst Black, White and Afrikaner learners, Black learners were forced to learn both official languages at that time namely English and Afrikaans thus triggering the Soweto uprisings in 1976 (Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996). The implication for teachers in Black schools was also problematic given the languages' political associations producing a ripple effect that is still subtly present to date. However, an attempt to provide non-discriminate education in South Africa arose from the urgency to redress the deeply entrenched scars of the past, which is discussed next.

#### **2.4.2 The transformation of English in Outcomes-based Education (C2005)**

This segment recalls how the new democracy had to ensure a heightened awareness of curriculum transformation through the role of education (Hoadley, 2015). Outcomes-based Education was the forerunner in the transformational process. The aim of OBE was to empower and affirm learners in accordance with the Constitution (DoE, 1997). The once

teacher-centred curriculum was swapped for a learner-centred approach. The term ‘Educators’ replaced the term ‘teachers’ and were viewed as ‘facilitators’ in the learning process. Traditionally, teachers in the past exercised dominance in the classroom while learners remained passive recipients. The subject *English* was renamed *Language, Literacy and Communication* and the outcomes for all languages, whether Home Language or Additional Language were referred to as ‘specific outcomes’ (Prinsloo & Janks, 2002).

Regarding English curriculum implementation, (DoE, 2000a) noted that schools were given liberties in teaching methods and content provided the learners met the ‘critical outcomes’ which was a measurement for the evaluation of specified goals, (Jansen, 1998) or were deemed competent through the ‘specific outcomes’ in a learning area. In C2005, the generic outcomes clearly explicated the knowledge, values and skills that “learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do” (Prinsloo & Janks, 2002, p. 3). However, in the government’s haste to rectify the ills of the past, OBE very soon began to expose its flaws especially in the English curriculum and these flaws are discussed next.

#### **2.4.3 OBE Policy expectations of learners in Language, Literacy and Communication**

The purpose of scrutinising policy’s expectations demonstrates how the outcomes that OBE comprised in Language, Literacy and Communication presented a mismatch between policy expectations and learners who were just beginning to transition into a new curriculum (Jansen, 1997) consequently affecting teachers’ experiences. For example, there were seven Specific Outcomes pertaining to learners required for all languages. These Specific Outcomes included learners being able to:

1. make and negotiate meaning and understanding;
2. show critical awareness of language usage;
3. respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts;
4. access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations;
5. know and apply language structures and conventions in context ;
6. use language for learning; and
7. use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations (DoE, 1997, p. 3)

The impact of an unfamiliar OBE English curriculum listed above highlighted the demands placed on learners. However, teachers' experiences of being compelled to learn themselves or adapt to the changing context as they taught was also an area of concern.

#### **2.4.4 Hopes for a better future for learners who had little exposure to English**

During this transitional period there was an influx of Black learners from townships and rural areas to urban schools where English was the medium of instruction in the hope of obtaining quality education which black parents and students saw as synonymous with teaching and learning in English (Msila, 2005). Msila (2005) carried out an Ethnographic study in which he found that parents sent their children to historically white schools since this brought hope of a brighter future. Considering that learners were coming from township schools, the specific outcomes presented a tall order for learners to achieve, as well the implications for teachers who had to teach second language learners.

#### **2.4.5 English teachers' experiences of teaching second language learners in OBE**

Under OBE, teachers had to unlearn or abandon all that they knew for a completely dissimilar experience to what they had been accustomed. A study carried out in the Cape metropolitan area (Geiger & O'Connor, 2009) explored teachers' experiences with teaching English to second language learners and revealed the frustrations of monolingual teachers being overworked in having to teach second language learners with limited English abilities. Support for teachers during changing curricula was insufficient (Geiger & O'Connor, 2009) and the period between finalisation and implementation of OBE was very short. A crash course in training was given to teachers who were then expected to cascade this information concerning various learning areas through the system for which they were not sufficiently trained to replicate (Harley & Wedekind, 2004). Implementing OBE while underestimating the overwhelming adjustments both teachers and learners had to make, was one of many attributes in the demise of the utopian ideal of an unbiased curriculum. Hence, another curriculum reform was looming.

#### **2.4.6 Curriculum changes in English - National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)**

After a failed attempt at a transformative curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement was introduced in 2002 as an attempt to streamline (Chisholm, 2005) the open-endedness of C2005. A comparison between OBE and NCS is drawn here to illustrate the differences between the two curricula. Firstly, the concept of outcomes was retained in order to bring about more organisation in the curriculum. Specific outcomes then changed to Learning outcomes (Prinsloo & Janks, 2002). In the previous curriculum, OBE expected learners who were not afforded equal access to knowledge and skills to suddenly think critically when interacting with the English curriculum. Critical thinking implied that learners had to view materials through an analytical or logical lens of reasoning (Janks, 2002). However, in the revised curriculum the emphasis was more on communicative language teaching. Further to this, in 2009 a review of NCS in the form of Revised National Curriculum Statement was implemented due to the contestations over the traces of OBE in the NCS.

A panel of curriculum experts appointed by the Minister of Basic Education looked at the challenges faced in implementing the NCS (Motshekga, 2009). Two of the main areas of concern were the transition between the different phases and assessments (Motshekga, 2009), concerns which are also echoed in this study. Of particular interest was the transition between Grades three and four where learners moved from three learning areas in the previous grade to nine in the following, with additional assessments in EHL which the researcher in this study explores as well. Most of these learners were being introduced to English as a medium of teaching and learning for the first time, contributing to poor results. The panel of curriculum experts suggested that more time for the teaching of EHL be allocated to help learners cope with the transition (Motshekga, 2009). Therefore, this study explores if the suggestions put forward by the panel of curriculum experts has made a difference in the way teachers implement the EHL curriculum.

#### **2.4.7 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement – Home Language and First Additional Language**

Before taking a look at what the EHL Curriculum entails, it is important to understand the concept of English Home Language as opposed to its counterpart which is English First

Additional Language. In South Africa, language learning includes both official and non-official languages that is accessible at different levels (DoE, 2012). Although Home Language is defined as the first language acquired by the learner, many South African schools do not cater for the masses in this regard. The Department of education states that “... the labels Home Language and First Additional Language refer to the proficiency levels at which the language is offered and not the native (Home) or acquired (as in the additional languages) language” (DoE, 2012, p. 8). To reiterate, the reference to Home Language is not the language itself per se but rather the proficiency thereof. In Home Language the teaching of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills are emphasised.

First Additional Language is not necessarily a learners’ mother tongue language nor does it take for granted that the learner is familiar with this language upon entering school. It is in the foundational phase of a learner’s entrance to school where their proficiency in the language must be developed. Therefore, many learners in South Africa must show great competence in reading and writing English by the end of Grade three since the Language of teaching and learning in Grade four is English (DoE, 2012).

The panel of experts assigned to review the NCS further recommended a new Curriculum and Assessment Policy document which would address all the uncertainties of past curricula succinctly. The Minister (Motshekga, 2009), expressed that CAPS was merely a revision of RNCS. CAPS implementation began in 2012 providing a detailed breakdown of skills to be completed for each term within a two-week cycle.

Table 1 below shows the differentiated time allocations for English Home Language and First Additional Language from Grades R to 12 (DoE, 2012, p. 6-7). When analysing the time allocated in different grades from Grade R to Grade twelve, one notices the decline in the number of hours per week in EHL from 10 hours in Grade R, to a mere 4.5 hours in Grades 10-12. There appears to be an incongruity displayed in Table 1. While a learner comes to school with less or no prior knowledge and is expected to develop proficiency in the first phase, very little time is allocated in First Additional Language to develop their proficiency in the language making it challenging especially in the transition to the Intermediate phase where the Language of Learning and Teaching is English.

**Table 1: Time allocation for English Home Language and English First Additional Language from Grades R to 12 (DoE, 2012, p. 6-7)**

Subject	Grades	Hours per week
Home Language	R	10
	One to Three	7 / 8
First Additional Language	One & Two	2 / 3
	Three	3 / 4
Home Language	Four to Six	6
First Additional Language		5
Home Language	Seven to Nine	5
First Additional Language		4
Home Language	Ten to Twelve	4.5
First Additional Language		

#### **2.4.8 The impact of an effective English Home Language curriculum for Grade four**

An effective curriculum which resonates into a good education is essential from the foundation in a learner's pedagogical journey. Spaul (2015) provides insights into how low education can become a poverty trap. Spaul (2015) and Copland, Garton, and Burns, (2014) discuss the link between education and the labour market. Spaul (2015) explored inequalities in learning outcomes, learner achievement in literacy and Mathematics and causes of learner drop out in South Africa and offered possible policy options that might address the situation. Among these suggestions was launching a national reading campaign. The rationale behind this suggestion was that if learners were not equipped with the basic literacy skills in the Foundation Phase, their performance in higher grades would be poor resulting in the task of the English teacher becoming more challenging (Spaul, 2015). Therefore, having discussed the importance of how a good foundation can impact the learner's future, teachers become responsible for effectively implementing the EHL curriculum.

#### **2.4.9 How do resources affect EHL curriculum implementation?**

Resources can sometimes pose a challenge for both teachers and learners if there is lack. The DoE (2012) stipulated classroom resources required by an EHL teacher which included sufficient copies of a range of texts to cater for varying reading levels, an assortment of materials such as newspapers, magazines, posters, brochures etc. and access to audio/visual aids used in the classroom. Makoe and McKinney (2014) concluded that there was a gap



between post-apartheid policy and the implementation of the policy in classroom practices. Data was sourced from a primary and a secondary suburban school in Johannesburg where there had been a migration of Black learners that had replaced White learners. Makoe and McKinney (2014) further explained that the disjuncture was as a result of the complex hegemony of English and the fact that the majority of learners' experience a lack of quality education in their Home Language. Makoe and McKinney (2014) argued that one of the most valuable resources in a classroom were the learners' multilingual repertoires that can be used as a tool for learning. If teachers could literally use the 'human resources' available to them and not make excuses for what was missing, what a rich pedagogical experience this would inculcate.

## **2.5 Global experiences of teaching English in primary schools**

EHL teachers is a description unique to CAPS in the South African context as outlined in 2.4.7 herein above. This section discusses English teachers' experiences in their contexts globally where similar challenges in teaching young learners are experienced as in the case of Grade four EHL teachers in this study. Challenges teachers face in teaching English to young learners who struggle with reading literacy competencies can also be problematic as alluded to by (Zimmerman & Smit, 2014). In a mixed-method approach 4459 teachers worldwide over five continents participated to respond to the research question on how teachers perceived English language teaching to young learners' (Copland et al., 2014). The global study investigated teachers' approaches and their understandings of roles and responsibilities in young learner classrooms also focusing on how policy affected these classrooms. Some of the most common challenges affecting many teachers in various educational settings were teaching writing and grammar, large numbers, discipline and the lack of resources was a central feature and teachers pleas were to focus on these challenges (Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2014).

Copland et al. (2014) explained that knowledge about English was less important than learners acquiring the basic communicative skills as English was fast growing into the lingua franca globally. A communicative approach to teaching and learning also changes the nature of language learning from an intellectual discipline to a practical skill. The governments' aim was to produce an "English-proficient workforce in the global economy" redirecting the emphasis from examinations (Copland et al., 2014, p. 756). Enever and British (2011) inferred that many countries have mandated curriculum policy changes as well as the teaching of

English without due regard for the language proficiency of teachers which is sometimes caused by the lack of adequate training. The conclusion drawn from the investigation of teachers' experiences in teaching second language learners brought up an interesting thought for the researcher where instead of distinguishing between English as an intellectual discipline from a practical skill, government's policy and teachers' proficiency should be integrated to promote English proficiency for both teachers and learners.

## **2.6 Curriculum implementation: Contradictions between product and process**

In this section, the contradictions by curriculum specialists regarding the teacher's role in implementing the curriculum, is described. The teacher's role pertaining to the implementation of educational purpose, objectives, educational experience and achievement was introduced by Tyler in the 1940s, based on the scientific approach (Tyler, 2013). The Tylerian approach to curriculum as a systematic plan highlighted how a prescribed instructional programme can function as an effective instrument in education, which has a strong connection to the way the EHL curriculum functions with its intentional scheme. Stenhouse (1975) differed from Tyler and advocated a more learner-centred approach which was socially constructed without prescribed objectives. Stenhouse's (1975) approach was based on a process of learning as opposed to a product of learning which arguably is missing in the EHL Curriculum. Stenhouse (1975) suggested that curriculum plans needed to be tested first then adapted by each teacher in their classroom which is not practical for CAPS. Primarily, the fear for not using the Tylerian approach due to the technical nature of curriculum design, was that by not having a clear set of guidelines, it could become dangerous and lack accountability, leading to teacher bias. This implies that teachers would teach only what they deemed important. The exploration of English teachers' experiences implementing EHL in this study resonates with the contentions of curriculum implementation models of Tyler and Stenhouse.

## **2.7 English teachers' experiences of understanding curriculum implementation**

Unless teachers' thoroughly understand the curriculum they will not successfully implement the curriculum (Barrow, 2015). This section shows the relationship between understanding the curriculum and implementing it. Khoza (2015) study revealed that teachers' were unfamiliar with theories that underpin CAPS and continued to teach in their own way as they had been doing all along, not being fully CAPS compliant. In so doing the participants adopted a

teacher-centred approach in haste to complete the syllabus (Khoza, 2015) which is all too familiar since this parallels the researcher's teaching experience in EHL.

Soenoewati (2015) addressed challenges facing English teachers which included the basic understanding of the curriculum. Soenoewati (2015) investigated schools in Indonesia and found that 87% of teachers failed to understand curriculum requirements due to the illogical order of Core Competencies and Basic Competencies. As a result teachers misinterpreted these competencies and chose inappropriate teaching materials which lead to assessing incorrectly. The process of preparing, implementing and evaluating thus became difficult so teachers just reverted to teaching only what they had understood, which was actually a disservice to their learners. The results of this international study by Soenoewati (2015) mirrors the results obtained by Khoza, (2015) in a local study, which found that teachers merely teach in a way that they are comfortable with, an important issue in this research study.

A large component of EHL curriculum is assessments (Majoni, 2017) which forms a major tool for curriculum evaluation. A common factor explored by Sethusha (2012) was how different contextual factors in schools influenced teachers' abilities to balance the demands placed on them by CAPS. Sethusha (2012) study employed teachers with varying years of experience from four different schools in North West Province, whose stories differed according to their contexts. Sethusha, (2012) explored Intermediate Phase teachers' experiences with CAPS more specifically on assessments which is also addressed in this study.


## **2.8 Challenges faced by English teachers in terms of support structures**

Attention in this section is focussed on the lack of support from the DoE for EHL teachers. Spaul (2015) drew attention to promoting competencies in teachers' content knowledge and teaching skills which he contended that South African teachers lacked in respect of the subjects they were teaching. Spaul (2015) particularly made reference to Mathematics and English teachers who required training and development. Comments were not only directed to teachers' professionalism but also to those curriculum advisors or subject specialist at district level. As government officials, the apparent subject specialists were not appointed based on expertise and many (Spaul, 2015) claimed had only a matric certificate. If subject specialists were to help teachers then they themselves should be able to demonstrate competent knowledge at a higher level than those they oversee. Spaul (2015) condemned government officials that were not qualified for their roles. Maharajh, Nkosi, and Mkhize (2016) also concurred with


Spaull, (2015) that a noticeable phenomenon was the shortage of subject specialists in their support of teachers, especially during CAPS implementation in primary schools. In order for successful curriculum implementation teachers must be trained with the proper skills and knowledge and have the full support of their subject advisors.

Table 2 below shows the content and teaching plans for the first two weeks of Grade four in Term one. Regarding the discussion of teachers' content knowledge and skills, if one examines the EHL curriculum policy, there are many aspects to be covered in this time frame. Considerations such as administration of teachers during the first few week of the year and orientation of learners to a new grade and phase are not considered within the existing framework.

**Table 2: Content and Teaching Plans for EHL Grade four over two-week cycle (DoE, 2012, p. 41)**

<b>Skills</b> 	<b>Listening &amp; Speaking (Oral)</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Viewing</b>	<b>Writing &amp; Presenting</b>	<b>Language Structures &amp; Conventions</b>
<b>Week – 1 and 2</b>	Listens to a short story, Text from the textbook, or Teacher's Resource File <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory activities: prediction</li> <li>• Identifies characters</li> <li>• Recalls main idea</li> <li>• Answers oral question</li> <li>• Retells a story</li> <li>• Retells events in correct sequence</li> <li>• Names the characters correctly</li> </ul>	Reads a short story, Text from the textbook or TRF Pre-reading: predicting from title and pictures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses reading strategies: making predictions, uses phonic and contextual clues</li> <li>• Discusses new vocabulary from the read text</li> </ul>	Writes a story based on a personal experience/event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chooses appropriate content for the topic</li> <li>• Uses the story structure as a frame</li> <li>• Includes characters</li> <li>• Uses appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation</li> <li>• Uses a range of vocabulary related to topic</li> </ul>	Word level work: common nouns, proper nouns, countable and uncountable nouns  Sentence level work: simple sentences  Spelling and punctuation: full stop, capital and lower case (small) letters

**Table 2 (continued): Content and Teaching Plans for EHL Grade four over two-week cycle (DoE, 2012, p. 41)**

<b>Skills</b> 	<b>Listening &amp; Speaking (Oral)</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Viewing</b>	<b>Writing &amp; Presenting</b>	<b>Language Structures &amp; Conventions</b>
<b>Week – 1 and 2</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies and comments on the characters</li> <li>• Gives and explains own feelings about the text</li> <li>• Reads aloud with clear pronunciation, phrasing, tempo,</li> <li>• Uses a dictionary</li> <li>• Reflects on texts read independently</li> <li>• Retells story or main ideas in 3 to 5 sentences</li> <li>• Expresses emotional response to texts read</li> <li>• Relates to own life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a personal dictionary</li> <li>• Uses the writing process</li> <li>• Planning / pre-writing</li> <li>• Drafting</li> <li>• Revising</li> <li>• Editing</li> <li>• Proofreading</li> <li>• Presenting</li> </ul>	

From an observation of Table 2, skills such as Listening and Speaking, Reading and Viewing, Writing and Presenting as well as Language Structures and Conventions are quite comprehensive so early on in the new phase. Pretorius (2014) pointed out that worldwide in most schooling systems, the focus from one phase to another, changes from “learning to read to reading to learn” (Pretorius, 2014, p. 53). From Grades one to three, familiar and repetitive foundational reading skills are developed which then transition into an extension of understanding and constructing meaning of sometimes unfamiliar content like that found in text books as opposed to familiar narrative texts which frames their literacy proficiency in their early development (Pretorius, 2014). In addition, to the afore mentioned skills; nine formal assessments totalling two hundred marks, daily classroom activities, feedback and correction

of all formal and informal tasks must also be completed in a term of nine weeks (DoE, 2012). Considering the transitioning learners are just finding their feet, following the EHL curriculum becomes challenging as it is expected that teachers complete a range of skills with these learners within limited time frames.

## **2.9 A local/national comparison between teacher's instructional expertise and literacy development**

A case study in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces sampling Grade four teachers and learners revealed the correlation between teacher's instructional expertise and its effects on literacy development (Zimmerman & Smit, 2014). The semi structured-interviews honed in on teachers' experiences of their English teaching strategies. The findings indicated that teachers' implementation of the curriculum policy still needed attention (Zimmerman & Smit, 2014). While literature on English teaching as a second language is abundant, Zimmerman and Smit (2014) verified that there was a scarcity in research on literacy development by Primary School teachers particularly in the Intermediate phase. In the next section the Conceptual Framework is explained and how it is aligned with the research study using the Curricula Spider Web (Berkvens et al., 2014, p. 8).

## **2.10 Drawing a distinction between Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The Curricula Spider Web by Thijs and Akker (2009), is built on a conceptual framework and is used in the research study because these components ask pertinent questions that helps one assess the quality of the EHL teaching and learning programme in the participants' context. Osanloo and Grant (2016) distinguished a Theoretical Framework from a Conceptual Framework by clarifying that a Theoretical Framework comes from an established theory or theories that have been tested, validated and accepted by scholars in literature. Osanloo and Grant (2016) also asserted that a Conceptual Framework is not merely a group of concepts but a logical structure that presents a visual of how these concepts relate to one another. Luse, Mennecke and Townsend (2012) added that a Conceptual Framework allows you to specify and define concepts within the phenomenon. Hence, the rationale for choosing the conceptual framework ties in with the researcher's study since the Curricula Spider Web comprises concepts that are illustrated for better understanding.

### **2.10.1 Background of the Curricula Spider Web**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) views education as ‘organised and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding valuable for all the activities of life’ (Tight, 2012, p. 17). The word ‘organised’ suggests that there must be a plan in place while the word ‘sustained’ refers to something that is on-going. The relevance to this study is that the EHL curriculum is organised however, whether it remains sustainable, is left to be seen. UNESCO’s goal as a global organisation is “Ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030” (Berkvens et al., 2014, p. 5). Thijs and Akker (2009) who developed the Curricula Spider Web are associated with UNESCO and understood how changes in society affect our educational system and its development. South Africa can identify with this idea through the changing curricula with changing times. Although Thijs and Akker (2009) focused on curriculum development, their insights are valuable not only to policy makers but all other stake holders involved in educational development like teachers.

The conceptual framework of the Curricula Spider Web is illustrated through a metaphor of a spider web in which all components referring to the ‘plan for learning’ are unified so that there are no inconsistencies meaning that the components must be addressed coherently to maintain its integrity (Van den Akker, Fasoglio & Mulder, 2010). A noteworthy point at this juncture would be that though the ten components visualised below are interrelated, emphasis on specific components may vary at different times provided it remains coherent. For example, studies on curriculum implementation have shown how teacher’s role must be given more attention before expecting changes in other components (Van den Akker, Fasoglio & Mulder, 2010).

### **2.10.2 How the Curricula Spider Web is relevant to the study**

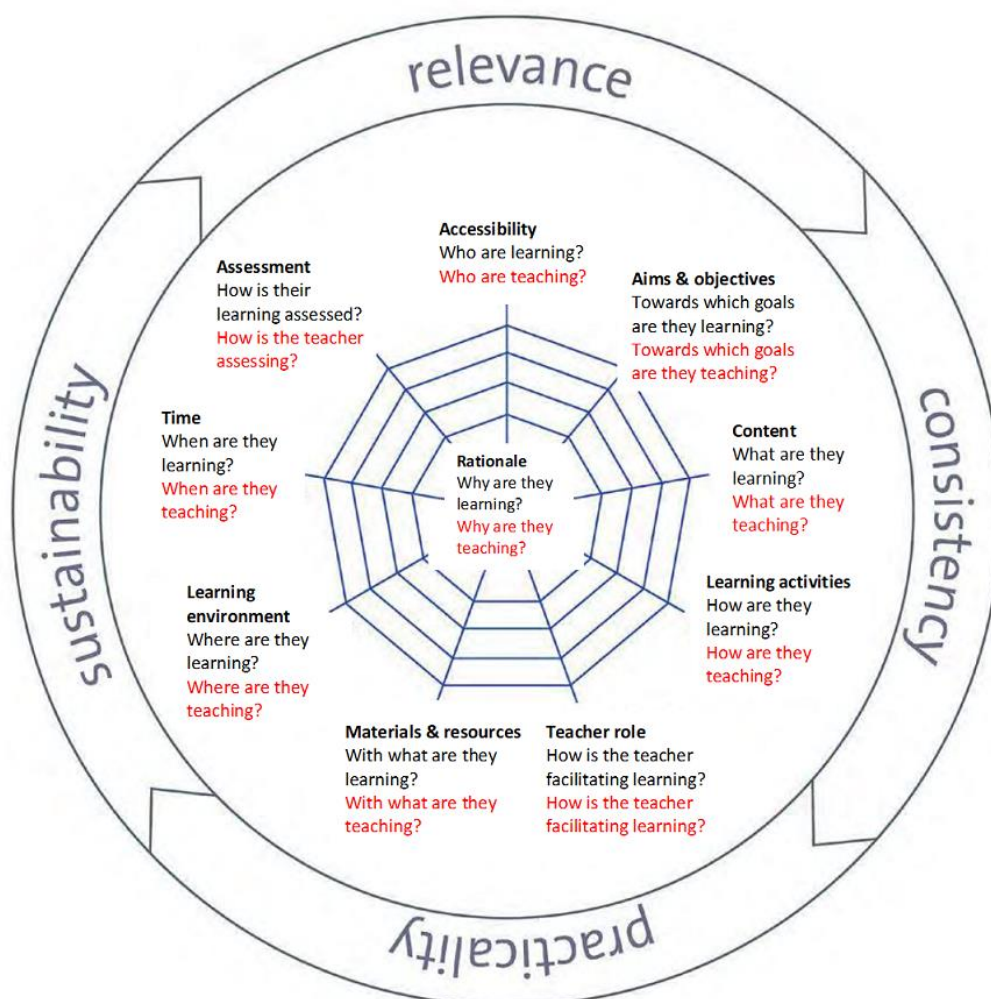
New knowledge and skills are continuously acquired and required in curricula issues because curricula is dynamic in nature and so are the contexts in which they are implemented. Thijs and Akker (2009) recognised the evolutionary nature of curriculum in society. Although contextually situated in the Netherlands, the Curricula Spider Web can be adapted in all educational settings (Berkvens, Van den Akker, & Brugman, 2014). Since the inception of the Curricula Spider Web no further developments have been initiated but academics like Khoza

(2015) have also used the Curricula Spider Web to explore research facilitator's and students experiences in an online learning environment. The pertinent questions forming the spider web which can be seen in Diagram 1 was also adapted for the semi-structured interviews and since each aspect builds on the other components within this framework, added substance to the research findings. For this reason, Khoza (2015) suggested that using the Curricular Spider Web (Thijs & Akker, 2009) would promote better understanding in the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

### 2.10.3 The original Curricula Spider Web and its adaptation for this study

Illustrated below in Diagram 1 is the Curricula Spider Web which combined the original (Berkvens et al., 2014, p. 8) and the adapted version for the purpose of this study.

**Diagram 1: The curricula spider web (Berkvens et al., 2014, p. 8) and adaptation for the study**





In the above diagram, the rationale is centrally situated in the web surrounded by nine other components. However, in the original version the corresponding questions to these components focus on the learners' experiences indicated in black. In order to make it relevant to the researcher's study, the questions have been adapted and is indicated in red in keeping with teachers' experiences with the exception of one component that remained the same. 'Teacher role' and its sub question, how is the teacher facilitating their learning was unchanged as a result of this component being applicable for both the learner and the teacher. The questions that accompany the components can further be broken down into sub-questions. Time is one example where the original corresponding question, 'When are they learning?' changes to, 'When are they teaching?' for the purpose of the study and can be extended further to – "How much time is available for various learning domains and how much time can be spent on specific learning tasks?" (Van den Akker et al., 2010, p. 7). Reference to time as an example was most appropriate since this factor appears to be limited in relation to curriculum implementation and coverage.

#### **2.10.4 Different curriculum levels and its relationship to the Curricula Spider Web (Van den Akker et al., 2010, p. 6)**

The significance of this section is understanding what the different curriculum levels represent and who is directly involved at these levels indicated in Table 3 below which is also linked to the Curricula Spider Web. The rationale, aims and objectives, and content indicated in red, are usually associated with what is 'intended' and in the EHL curriculum, time allocations for various subjects will be specified on a national level once again placing EHL teachers under duress to complete the prescribed content. Under the micro curriculum where the teacher and the classroom is the focus, all other components need to collaborate for successful implementation. Operationally, the 'implemented' curriculum includes learning activities, teacher role, and materials and resources which are the main components in this level. The assessment component according to (Van den Akker et al., 2010) should be focussed on separately since this is a critical component in the curriculum which measures if the outcomes have been 'attained'.

**Table 3: Curriculum levels in the spider web (Van den Akker et al., 2010)**

<b>INTENDED</b>	Ideal	Vision - rationale or basic philosophy underlying a curriculum
	Formal/Written	Intentions – what is prescribed as specified in curriculum documents and/or materials <b>Rationale, Aims &amp; objectives, Content</b>
<b>IMPLEMENTED</b>	Perceived	Curriculum as interpreted by its users (especially teachers)
	Operational	Actual process of teaching and learning (also: curriculum-in-action) <b>Learning activities, Teacher role, and Materials &amp; resources</b>
<b>ATTAINED</b>	Experiential	Learning experiences as perceived by learners
	Learned	Resulting learning outcomes of learners <b>Assessments</b>

### **2.10.5 English teachers’ experiences with curriculum autonomy**

In this section attention is directed at teachers’ experiences of curriculum liberties and restraints in an international context in comparison to our national context. The Curricula Spider Web is set against an international standard where teachers are given more room to play around with design implementation (Van den Akker et al., 2010). European countries like the Netherlands employed the Curricula Spider Web in teaching English as a foreign language (Van den Akker et al., 2010). The role of the teacher for example included interventions such as “pedagogical interaction, dialogic discourse and feedback” (Van den Akker et al., 2010, p. 9) and teachers were instrumental in deciding during which part of the language learning process these interventions would best be effective. The distinction between curriculum autonomy, like that of teachers in the Netherlands based on personal contexts, as opposed to a generic curriculum where teachers are not allowed those privileges despite their diverse contexts, clearly contrasts with South Africa. Van den Akker et al., (2010) reinforced the point of the prevailing gap between intended, implemented and attained curricula and a miscommunication between these leads to failure.

### **2.10.6 The four quality criteria for successful curriculum implementation in EHL**

UNESCO’s ultimate goal on the post-2015 education agenda was a shift from merely getting learners into schools (quantity) to relevant learning (quality) (Berkvens et al. Diagram 1, 2014).

This section explains how from this initiative stemmed four revolving quality criteria namely relevance, consistency, practicality and sustainability, universal factors that can be adopted to measure the success of curriculum implementation (Berkvens et al., 2014).

The four criteria as illustrated above forms an integral part of the Curricula Spider Web. In addition, the quality criteria can either apply to education on the whole or to specific components like teacher roles. Each criterion will be explained in its relationship to EHL. The first criterion relevance is described as the degree to which teachers are teaching relevant content. In other words, are the teachers meeting the predetermined requirements of the EHL curriculum? The next two criteria which are parallel, are practicality and consistency, which deal with how the decisions, policies and materials employed by teachers fit the context for which it was designed. Lastly, sustainability, which speaks to how successful decisions, policies and materials will be in the future, for example, in the case of unforeseen challenges like budget deficits, and how the teacher will navigate this. The concern as (Berkvens et al., 2014) points out, is that those who use the materials do not always participate in the design and development, which ends in materials being impractical in certain contexts. Similarly, with the EHL curriculum, the lack of involvement in design and development has a ripple effect on teachers' experiences as they are compelled to use what has been prescribed by the Department of Education.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

The review of literature in the chapter above, highlights the dearth of research concerning teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum in Grade four. To that end, the Literature Review provided an overview of past curricula and the repercussions thereof. Through this trail, the Chapter described how governmental political strategies from the apartheid era pertaining to Language-in-education policy has impacted later generations. Further, government's curriculum policy intentions and teachers' implementation thereof was interrogated to address the research phenomenon. The review of the literature focused on the implementation of new curricula to learners who were also faced with unfamiliar learning contexts and thereby impacted English teachers' experiences.

Irrespective of the context, be it pedagogical, geographical or socio-economic variables, quality education is paramount as alluded to by (Berkvens et al., 2014). The Curricula Spider Web is

used in educational settings to guide the educational experience. While the learner was the central focus in the original conceptual framework, it is the teacher who must ensure that the intended curriculum is implemented effectively and efficiently to attain the desired outcomes. Teacher autonomy to a degree has its pros and cons. Some might argue that having a prescribed curriculum such as CAPS is too restrictive (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013) while others like (Ramatlapanana & Makonye, 2012) assert that having too much freedom like in the Netherlands leaves room for a range of opinions regarding the curriculum. Adapting the components and incorporating the three levels of curriculum in the Curricula Spider Web for the researcher's study appears as a useful tool to explore teachers' experiences, and will be used analytically to review the data in Chapter 4. Either way, teachers' experiences matter most since it is their daily engagement with the curriculum that determines the success or failure of its implementation. In the next chapter, the research methodology will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The contentions and debates about curriculum and EHL curriculum implementation was discussed in Chapter 2. A historical overview of the Language-in-education policy and the SA curriculum transformation from the Apartheid to post-apartheid era to the present CAPS curriculum, was described. Themes like challenging contextual factors and how this impacted both teachers and learners were also described, and the international and national research on English teachers' experiences in curriculum transformation and implementation was reviewed. Finally, the Conceptual framework using the Curricula Spider Web with its ten components that is included in the three curriculum levels was discussed.

In this chapter, the research methodology used in this study is explained in order to respond to the research question, "What are English Teachers' experiences with implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade 4?" The choice of paradigm, methodology and methods is specified, followed by a discussion of how the data analysis is intended, and how *Trustworthiness* is established. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, limitations and delimitations.

### **3.2 Constructivist and Interpretivist Paradigm**

A qualitative design using an Interpretivist and Constructivist paradigm was chosen as the framework to understand the experiences of Grade four teachers in the implementation of the EHL curriculum. The Interpretivist and Constructivist paradigms are used to understand the viewpoint of a subject from their interpretation of their socially constructed reality.

The main idea in using the Interpretivist paradigm is to understand the personal world of the participant, the meanings they construct of the context, and his or her understanding of their subjective experience (Kivunja, & Kuyini, 2017). The viewpoint of the observer is de-emphasised and the participants' understanding takes prominence, underscoring the main idea of Interpretivist paradigm that reality is socially constructed (Kivunja, & Kuyini, 2017). Therefore the Interpretivist paradigm is closely aligned with the Constructivist paradigm (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and is often regarded as overlapping.

The Constructivist approach originated from the study of hermeneutics which involved an interpretive understanding or meaning (Clegg & Slife, 2009) similar to that of the Interpretivist approach. Hence, the association between the Constructivist and Interpretivist paradigms suggests that they are interchangeable because one is embedded in the other (Clegg & Slife, 2009). Combined with hermeneutics is the philosophy of phenomenology initiated by Edmund Husserl which also sought to understand the world of human experience as in this study (Cohen et al., 2011) in trying to understand EHL teachers' experiences of implementing the curriculum. Originally, historians attempted to understand what the authors of a specific historical time and culture were trying to communicate through their documents, thus the use of hermeneutics (Mertens, 2014). To date, Constructivist and Interpretivist researchers apply the term hermeneutics more generally to make meaning of a situation from a particular perspective (Mertens, 2014). The Constructivist and Interpretivist paradigms are built on the principle that knowledge is socially constructed in the research process (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Therefore, for this study, an understanding of participants' lived experiences was pivotal as realities were discovered through the participants' personal experiences, backgrounds and perceptions of the research phenomenon (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). The Constructivist and Interpretivist Paradigm has a strong link to qualitative design approach (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) which are the methods of choice for this research undertaking.

Four important components are linked to paradigms, viz., ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Epistemology philosophises knowledge and how we come to know in other words, what counts as knowledge (Krauss, 2005). The Constructivist and Interpretivist paradigms accept that knowledge is socially constructed and people have multiple perceptions of reality. This study acknowledges that position and hence attempts to gain the participants' understanding of how they experience the implementation of the EHL curriculum, by obtaining their views and meanings through semi-structured interviews, and giving their voices prominence in the process of data collection and analysis. Closely related to epistemology is ontology and methodology. Qualitative researchers' ontological assumptions are based on the perception that there exists multiple realities which are experienced differently as a result of our personal opinions (Krauss, 2005). In terms of this study, participants' chosen represented different realities through their individual experiences in their pedagogical contexts. In qualitative research then, it is argued that there is no objective reality but instead reality is subjective because of the unique nature of individuals such as the researcher or the participants who are engaging with the phenomenon of interest (Wahyuni,

2012). Since this study involved participants, ethical issues for example participants' rights had to be considered and this approach is referred to as axiology (Kivunja, & Kuyini, 2017). The next section on Methodology will provide further clarity on how we come to know through the research process.

### **3.3 Methodology**

Methodology refers to the attainment of knowledge through specific methods such as the procedures or tools (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Methodology is the overall approach to research and also guides the research process in terms of the techniques used in finding answers to the research questions (Kumar, 2019). Qualitative researchers adopt a nonlinear path, allowing a free flow to research where the researcher sets out to explore the social capital, that is differing views within a context (Choy, 2014). Since social capital varies between entities that may also share similarities like that in an educational context, it can provide multiple descriptions to the phenomenon under scrutiny. The case study methodology was the fitting option for this study and the reasons for this choice is explained in the following section.

### **3.4 Case study**

One of the methods to collect information is through case studies which are commonly found in qualitative studies. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) explained that the purpose of a case study is to intensively probe and analyse the phenomena of a unit with the intention of finding out more about the wider population which they represent. The phenomenon analytically explored by the researcher was teachers' experiences of curriculum implementation.

Case studies are deep investigations within bounded contexts and can vary in scale from single individuals to groups or geographical contexts and events in which meanings and underlying principles in real life contexts are explored (Press Academia, 2018). In this study, Grade four EHL teachers formed the unit or group of participants (Cohen et al., 2011) and the intention of the exploration was to gain better insights into teachers' experiences. Yin (2014), who is inclined to the positivist approach which relies on statistical data therefore, criticised qualitative case study research as permitting the researcher too much freedom, which consequently influences the outcomes. However, Yin (2014) acknowledged that the goal of a

good case study in research is to design, collect and present data and to analyse and report the findings in an unbiased manner, and it is argued that understanding and reporting the meanings provided by the participants as they see it, provides unbiased, richer and deeper data. However, the researcher must be aware of Krusenivik's (2016) concerns that since the researcher is fully immersed in the research process, she could subconsciously steer the process in a certain direction.

Having discussed the advantages and disadvantages, this researcher is aware that case study researchers can easily become swayed in the process, and especially in this study where the researcher is an EHL teacher herself. Thus, the researcher is aware that due care had to be given to all the aspects of *trustworthiness* in this study (to be discussed in detail in Section 3.8) and that foremost should be the exploratory purpose of the case study. In other words, the reason for the research undertaking was to understand the experiences of Grade four EHL teachers in curriculum implementation, and make their voices heard. Furthermore, the researcher was cognisant of the code of conduct, which was to present information that is ethically sound and non-prejudicial.

### **3.5 Data collection using semi-structured interviews**

Collecting research data involves three major methods according to (Bassey, 1999), namely: asking questions which the researcher employed through semi-structured interviews; reading documents, and observations.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) referred to interviews as a multi-sensory research tool since personal interaction can reveal verbal responses through what is spoken by the participant and non-verbal responses through long pauses or hesitation to questions asked. Under the broad umbrella of interviews three entities will be explained, namely, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews to provide a rationale for the choice of semi-structured interviews for this study. Kelley, Clark, Brown and Sitzia (2003) explained structured interviews as a face-to-face questionnaire that followed a particular order from a list of questions. While in an unstructured interview, open ended questions are used more frequently and the researcher takes their cue from the respondents answers (Turner, 2010). However, open ended questions allow freedom of expression to the point that it can become rather laborious later on when it comes to transcriptions and data analysis. Semi-structured are not



as rigid as structured interviews or as unrestricted as unstructured interviews (Berg, 2009). Semi-structured interviews have a basic outline or structure but allow the participant to respond as deeply as she wants to. The interviewer may also probe for deeper responses.

The method employed in this study was semi-structured interviews, to allow for a focus on the phenomenon of EHL curricula implementation to be maintained, but flexible to allow the teachers to openly speak about their experiences. One semi-structured interview that lasted up to thirty minutes was conducted with each participant. Arrangements were officially made with the school principals and the respective teachers. These interviews were conducted at the participants' schools in private venues like the library or the school hall. It was found that the allocated time was adequate for teachers to answer all the interview questions. The flexibility of this type of interview method granted the researcher an opportunity to exercise a degree of control while concurrently encouraging spontaneity (Berg, 2009), and using probing to extract richer and deeper data from the participants. Although semi-structured interviews have a degree of flexibility, a disadvantage is that the data from the responses of participants are not generalisable to other studies (Woods, 2011). However, given that the generalisability of the study was not a methodological concern, the semi-structured interview served the purpose of eliciting data in a particular context.

The interview schedule comprised of a set of questions (indicated in italics) which are associated with the components in the Curricula Spider Web that attempted to address the research phenomenon. These included:

- Years of experience which provided a background into familiarity with curricula (*Who are teaching, Where are they teaching, Why are they teaching?*);
- Contextual factors like learner profiles (*Who are learning?*), resources (*With what are they teaching?*), stakeholder support pointed towards the implementation of EHL within differing contexts;
- Highlights or challenges with EHL enabled participants to discuss personal experiences of the curriculum (*Towards which goals are they teaching, How is the teacher assessing?*);
- Managing the teaching and learning process detailed how the participants implemented what was prescribed by the curriculum (*How are they teaching, How is the teacher facilitating their learning?*); and
- Recommendations for change in the curriculum allowed an opportunity for participants to suggest changes they felt would make a difference to their teaching experience.

In a semi-structured interview flexibility depends on the researcher's ability to 'read' the situation (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014). For example, at times the participant may be quite forthcoming with information or the respondent may not have much to say at all. Semi-structured interviews therefore, can also be inconsistent in terms of the researcher's follow on questions because every participant engages differently. Schultze and Avital (2011) advocated that one of the prerequisites to exploring a participant's inner world of their social reality is the rapport that is established between the researcher and the participant. Whilst the goal was to extract as much valuable in-depth information (Schultze & Avital, 2011) warned that interviewing does not necessarily produce meaningful insights or promise a compilation of rich data, if the interview goes off on another tangent and is misguided by the researcher which constitutes as a disadvantage. For novice researchers, inexperience can be disadvantageous in that they may lose important data by not asking prompt questions or probing at the appropriate time (Doody & Noonan, 2013). However, the researcher provided a comfortable environment for the participants to engage and ensured undivided attention so as to avoid missing important data.

### **3.6 Sampling and sampling methods**

Sampling refers to the selection of participants to represent a larger group for the purpose of gleaning information (Kemper, Stringfield & Teddlie, 2003). Kemper, Stringfield and Teddlie (2003) discussed a few key principles that governed different types of sampling. Among these principles were the sampling strategy which (Kemper et al., 2003) explained should originate from the research questions and the conceptual framework within the study. Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia (2003, p. 264) drew attention to two kinds of sampling, random – which is associated with the quantitative approach and non-random sampling – which is more often used in the qualitative approach, thus employed for this study. In terms of sampling methods, the purposive or purposeful sampling method was chosen. Purposive sampling, according to (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011) entails the intentional identification and selection of specific participants individually or in groups who have experience with the research phenomenon. The purposive strategy usually begins with a broader perspective which is later narrowed to accumulate relevant data through participants answering the same questions (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Six Grade four EHL teachers who were currently teaching under the current National Curriculum CAPS were selected. The participants in this research study were carefully selected based on the following criteria:

- Participants had at least one-year experience in EHL teaching in Grade four;
- Participants attained a minimum three-year teaching qualification; and
- Participants complied with CAPS requirements, that is, following the EHL policy document.

Grade four teachers from the Umlazi District, Durban, South Africa were selected irrespective of race or gender because this area also falls under the researcher's jurisdiction. Participants were contacted via email to initiate the interview process once Ethical Clearance was approved by the university and permission was granted by the DoE, and the principals of the respective schools.

The sample size comprised six multiracial female teachers from three primary schools closely located to each other where the interviews took place. Although, the three participants from the first school were classroom based and taught all subjects, they only decided to become classroom based in 2018 after being subject teachers prior to this decision. The other three participants on the other hand, had been classroom based all along. Mouton (2001) supported the use of a smaller sample size in quantitative research because he argued that participants were chosen because they could provide in depth insights on the research phenomenon.

Experience and knowledge about the research phenomenon is vital for the success of data collection however, other factors such as the participants' consent, availability, expression of opinions and reflection were also crucial (Bernard, 2017). In this study, the researcher chose participants who had both experience and knowledge regarding the phenomenon and could make a valuable contribution to the study. The valuable information which the participants can offer then, downplays the emphasis on sample size as opposed to quantitative sampling methods wherein quantity is emphasised.

### **3.7 Data analysis methods**

According to St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) interviewing has become one of the most popular methods of data collection in qualitative research. St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) added that the

authentic voices of the participants has become so valuable to the researcher that it can provide a foundation for knowledge, but cautions that researchers may sometimes err in that they use any and all data and may therefore overlook the quality of data. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) suggested that misinterpretations could be avoided by the researcher when analysing data if the findings are thoroughly screened. Vithal and Jansen (2012) elucidated a three step data analysis method, in addition, a six step process of identifying and analysing themes by (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was concurrently employed in this study.

The first step that (Vithal & Jansen, 2012) explained was that of scanning and cleaning the data. The researcher manually sifted and sorted through the data collected by reading and re-reading the transcriptions which may have sometimes been quite sizeable, to extract the most valuable information sourced. The second step involved organising the data which was about streamlining the data into particular themes (Vithal & Jansen, 2012). The technique used by the researcher to identify, summarise, analyse and report common themes of the transcribed textual data was Content analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The last of the three steps (Vithal & Jansen, 2012) described was about presenting the data transcriptions to the participants for perusal and verification. Once the participants were satisfied and had no amendments, then the final compilation was initiated. In addition, Braun and Clarke (2016) have provided a simple and clear process in analysing the transcribed textual data; a six step process included becoming immersed in the data until the researcher is familiar with it, generating codes that the researcher finds interesting and can add value to the study, analysing these codes to form possible themes, reviewing themes to find coherent patterns, defining your theme so that the reader can identify what it is about followed by a write up of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes in analysing data refers to the frequencies of ideas or patterns elicited from the transcriptions (Cohen et al., 2011) which the researcher was able to employ in this study.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research places much emphasis on *trustworthiness* in contrast to the quantitative approach which focuses on data being replicable and verifiable (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The research project must ensure reliability and trustworthiness in order to be recognised (Stavros & Westberg, 2009).

There are four criteria in determining if the reported results are sound, which are, *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* (Yilmaz, 2013). With regard to the research findings, credibility refers to the authenticity thereof (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and in this study a recording device with another for back-up was used to ensure that the data collected would not only be accurate but that the data would not be lost if any technical problems were encountered. The participants were informed prior to the interview about the recording as part of the ethics and their signed consent was obtained. The researcher later transcribed this recorded data into textual data which was then analysed. To eliminate researcher bias, members checking allowed the participants to screen the data for any inconsistencies and strengthen credibility and confirmability (Cope, 2014).

Two criteria in determining if the research findings are sound are, *transferability* and *dependability*. *Transferability* refers to research that can be used in another situation and *dependability* means that the research can be replicated in other contexts, but this is uncommon in qualitative case studies (Yilmaz, 2013). Therefore, transferability and dependability are contextualised, which means that the findings apply only to a specific situation, and is therefore not generalisable to other contexts (Cope, 2014). The contexts of the sampled schools also differed, and therefore the results were not generalisable. Therefore, transferability and dependability involves a subjective reality and is uncommon in case studies as asserted by (Yilmaz, 2013) and was not employed by the researcher in this study.

### **3.9 Ethics**

Whenever participants are used in a research study, ethical considerations must be given precedence as this has legal, emotional, psychological and sometimes physical implications (Flick, 2014). Informed consent from participants is the compulsory prerequisite, with a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity are two crucial factors when collecting data. In this study, informed consent was attained through written signatures after the document was clearly explained to the participants. The gate-keepers in various organisations and institutions such as University of KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Basic Education as well as the participating schools and teachers were contacted first to seek official permission in order to carry out this study. Official permission is an absolute since the gate-keepers are responsible for those they oversee, therefore, this authority also comes with protection of participants rights which was detailed in the permission letter.

Immediately upon receiving official permission, the participants were contacted telephonically to secure an appointment at their convenience for the interview. Confidentiality was a priority so that the participants would be more comfortable with forthcoming information. Pseudonyms were used in the data transcription to conceal participants' true identities (Cohen et al., 2011).

For further security, the data and stored samples are securely kept to be disposed of after five years. Copies of the dissertation are to be made available upon the participants' request, and the dissertation is accessible online from the University library. Bassey (1999) stressed the fact that deception must not be associated with a researcher but rather integrity should be foremost. This was achieved by strictly adhering to proper protocols guiding ethical research which the researcher in this study complied with.

### **3.10 Limitations and delimitations**

In any research study, the researcher may encounter matters that they cannot control. Simon and Goes (2013) defined limitations as matters and occurrences that are beyond the researcher's control. Such an occurrence was encountered when one of the participant's declined to participate after giving written consent, due to the participant's busy work schedule. The participant exercised her right to withdraw in accordance with the provisions of the consent letter. The challenge was resolved by choosing another participant fitting the profile of a Grade four EHL teacher at the same school. The substitute participant proved beneficial as she was the only participant teaching EHL whose second language was English providing a different perspective from the other participants who were first language English speakers. In another instance, a participant was very reluctant for the interview to be recorded as she feared that others would be able to identify her by her responses even if pseudonyms were used. The researcher's reiteration about complete confidentiality reassured the participant resulting in acceptance of using the recording device. This fear is not uncommon in research as (Bell, 2014) also found that participants have a fear of being recorded. Another important consideration that was made clear to the participants at the outset of the interview was that there was no compensation for their input otherwise their motives may have been questionable or may have tainted the research (Cohen et al., 2011). For example, if a participant was offered

compensation, they might have felt compelled to please the interviewer and not necessarily show opposition or indifference regarding the research topic.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The overlap between the Interpretivist and Constructivist paradigms chosen for this study was outlined at the beginning of Chapter 3. This explanation highlighted how the social construction of participants' realities not only contributes to the study but also enables the researcher to understand the phenomenon better through participants' experiences within the context. Chapter 3 explicated the methodology and methods employed in order to respond to the research question: What are English Teachers' experiences with implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade 4? The process of acquiring relevant data and the steps to analyse the data were explained. Additionally, ethical issues were discussed and the limitations and delimitations of the research study were addressed. In the next Chapter, the data will be analysed.

## **CHAPTER 4: Analysis of Data**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 3, a detailed account of the methods and methodologies that were employed in this research undertaking was provided. Drawing from (Kelley et al., 2003) and Vithal and Jansen (2012), the data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed into common themes from the participants' experiences, and will be explored in this chapter. The six participants were given pseudonyms in compliance with ethical stipulations which ensured confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2011). The transcripts of the audio recordings of the interviews, were analysed using content analysis to gain insight into the research question: "What are teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum in Grade four" in selected South African schools in Umlazi district.

The structure of this chapter will unfold in the following sequence. Firstly, biographical profiles of the participants will be described so that an understanding of their backgrounds in teaching and specifically in teaching EHL will be highlighted. Thereafter, the findings emerging from the data will be discussed in connection with the three levels of curriculum namely Intended, Implemented and Attained and its relationship to the Curricula Spider Web which forms the conceptual framework. In presenting the findings of teachers' experiences, an analysis of the data will be discussed through the participants' responses. The direct words of the participants are italicised.

### **4.2 Biographical profiles of participants**

Table 4 below provides an overview of the participants in the study. Participants are named Participant 1 to Participant 6. The next column identifies each of the three schools as A, B and C, and the number 4 means Grade 4 teachers. Two teachers were selected from School A (4A), three from School (4B) and one from School C (4C). Although the participants' ages were not requested for their years of experience during the interviews, this information was asked after the interviews via a text message. This oversight became apparent during the transcription of the data as this was required to understand the ages and years of teaching experience, especially from Participants 1 to 4 which has impelled the researcher to probe further.



**Table 4: Participants experiences in teaching English Home Language in a changing context**

Participants	School	Age	Highest Qualifications	Teaching Experience	Teaching EHL in Grade 4
Participant 1	4 A	47	Bachelor of Education Degree	4 years	4 years
Participant 2	4 A	39	Bachelor of Education Degree	5 years	2 years
Participant 3	4 B	35	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	8 years	2 years
Participant 4	4 B	25	Bachelor of Education Degree	1 year	Less than 1 year
Participant 5	4 B	51	3 year Teaching Diploma	15 years	5 years
Participant 6	4 C	39	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	19 years	13 years

From Table 4 presented above, it is observed that the participants' ages ranged from 25 to 51 years and each had a teaching qualification. Collectively, the participants had a total of 52 years of teaching experience but only sum total of 27 years teaching English Home Language. The following section discusses the participants past and present experiences of teaching English in relation to Table 4.

### **4.3 Past and present experiences of teaching the English curriculum**

In exploring teachers' experiences with teaching English in past curricula, the intention of the researcher was to draw comparisons to their present experience hence obtaining a wider perspective of their overall experiences. Table 4 above showed that only one of the six participants had formal interaction when it comes to teaching English under the previous curricula so the data did not offer much information as a result of the participants' unfamiliarity with content in the previous English curricula. However, this was not a huge setback for the researcher since the research phenomenon centred around the present CAPS curriculum. When the inquiry of familiarity with past curricula was addressed, Participant 6 who had experience with RNCS indicated that CAPS was the better of the two curricula in her response. Participant 6 described the EHL curriculum as having "*more direction*" and Participant 1 echoed Participant 6's sentiments about the curriculum being "*more in depth*". Participant 5 who had

the second longest years of experience in teaching English Home Language added that the EHL curriculum was “*very structured with clear guidelines.*” Participant 2’s description of CAPS highlighted that the curriculum in terms of planning was helpful because she believed that “*it makes it easy in that it tells me what I need to teach specifically week by week...*” as compared to past curricular like OBE where teachers’ were overloaded administratively as (Jansen, 1998) discussed during the first transformative curriculum change. As a novice teacher Participant 3 expressed that:

*CAPS document stipulated exactly the number of formal/informal tasks that you need to carry out. The topics are all covered in the CAPS document so it gives you a very nice breakdown.*

From the above responses the assumption was that CAPS was more favoured by the participants. The participants’ subsequent responses after probing however, revealed further information about challenges, which will be analysed in the ensuing sections. The responses in this section related to teachers’ experiences on CAPS in terms of EHL policy but the following sections will not only focus on the curriculum policy but how teachers implement it.

#### **4.4 Teachers’ experiences of the EHL curriculum on what is intended, implemented and attained**

Essentially, the implementation of the curriculum in respect of Learning activities, Teacher role, and Materials and resources is at the core of the research study and is one of the main themes. Therefore, the participants were interviewed in order to find out about the relationship between what is intended, how curriculum is implemented and its bearing on whether the desired outcomes have been attained. The next few sections will explain these three concepts in relation to its associate components from the Curricula Spider Web and how it influences the teaching of EHL. In answering the research question the strategy of identifying and reporting common themes through Content analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2017) had to be employed to extract meaningful data. The Rationale, Content, Aims and objectives in the Curricula Spider Web which are linked to the Intended level, pertains to the vision behind the curriculum and its prescriptions and this discussion follows hereafter.

#### 4.4.1 Intended Curriculum: Teachers' experiences of the Intended EHL curriculum policy

The theme highlighted in this section is EHL teachers' endeavours to bridge the policy gap between what is intended and implemented in the EHL curriculum. The Intended curriculum is formulated by the Ministry and encompasses curriculum decisions, policies and materials concerning the Rationale, Aims & Objectives and Content which coincidentally make up part of the Curriculum Spider Web (Van den Akker et al., 2010). When looking at the feedback at the outset on the participants' experiences with CAPS, it appeared to be beneficial as was the aim of the Ministry of Basic Education (DoE. Act 108, 1996).

The participants were asked, "From your experiences, what are some of the challenges you have faced?" and their responses are discussed next.

Subsequently, what is intended by the Ministry in terms of what must be taught also forces learners to passively accept what is prescribed irrespective of the transition to the new phase. The fact that they are second language English learners presents challenges for both teachers' and learners' like Participant 4 who is a newly qualified teacher is "*finding it difficult to bridge the gap*" and mentioned that "*most of the children are just not coping with the transition*". Participant 1 expressed that the learners who are coming to a new phase "*battle with the extra workload*". This suggested that the doubled volume workload can impede the swift progression of the prescribed EHL curriculum thus ending in negative consequences as is implied by Participants 2, 3 and 5 below. The shared sentiments are highlighted below to show commonality amongst the participants.

*Participant 2: You wonder what did they learn from Grade Three... they scared, they don't know what to do. Grade Three, they only doing four subjects. Now here, there's more subjects, more content, more theory involved.*

*Participant 3: There is too much content to cover especially considering the transition from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase, now these children have to deal with six different learning areas. It's very challenging on the learner.*

*Participant 5: I think that the curriculum is far too vast. It covers too much in a short amount of time. The children are expected to learn a whole lot of different language*

*concepts instead of just trying to get them to master the one. Especially in Grade Four where they are faced with many other subjects, it's a lot for them to take in.*

The words regarding the content of the EHL curriculum that stand out in the above responses from Participants 2, 3 and 5 respectively, are “*more*”, “*too much*” and “*a lot*” which often appears in other responses throughout this chapter as well. All participants leaned towards the same argument concerning the overwhelming changes in Grade four - they felt that teachers had to try to help learners readjust to a different way of teaching and learning.

The data in this section on the Intended curriculum suggests that the Rationale, Aims & Objectives and Content stipulated by curriculum and policy makers are overwhelming for both teachers and learners given the amount of work in relation to the duration in which to complete its requirements. This analysis of the participants’ experiences regarding the prescriptions of curriculum policy leads to the next level of curriculum which explores teachers’ experiences of the curriculum in action meaning the implementation of EHL.

#### **4.4.2 Implemented curriculum: Teachers’ experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum**

The main theme emerging in the second curriculum level, which is the Implemented Curriculum, directly analyses the teachers’ experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum. For the purpose of this study, the adaptation of the Curricula Spider Web in shifting the focus from the learner to the teacher, was made to all the components except one – that is - the teacher’s role (Refer to Diagram 1). This particular component of teacher’s role did not necessitate a change because whether one looks at it from the teacher’s or the learner’s perspective, the question of how the teacher facilitates learning, applies to both stakeholders (Berkvens et al., 2014). What Berkvens et al. (2014) argued is that learning activities and the learning environment are only effective when teachers invite learners to engage. The teacher’s role unpacks the efficacy of covering the four components in the EHL curriculum, the challenges faced by transitioning learners and the repercussions for EHL teachers in this study. Further, the component of Materials and resources found in the Curricula Spider Web will be looked at under the sub heading 4.2.2.3 as it forms part of the implemented curriculum.

#### 4.4.2.1 The efficacy of teaching all core components in English Home Language within its cycles

This subsection explores the effectiveness of teaching the EHL content within its two-week cycles given its extensive content. In order to establish how participants felt about what the policy document intended and what they were actually able to implement, participants were asked to explain how effectively the four key components in English of Listening and speaking, Reading and Viewing, Writing and Presenting, Language Structures and Conventions were covered within the two-week cycle. Teachers were posed the following question, “Are the four key components of Listening and speaking, Reading and Viewing, Writing and Presenting, Language Structures and Conventions adequately covered within a two-week cycle?”

In response to the question above, Participant 1 highlighted her time management forte’ by remarking that she prioritises her time very well so she does complete all the work because, *“It’s compulsory that we do”* but thereafter contradicted herself when she added that some extra time was taken from their breaks or intervention programmes like extra lessons which are done before school. This response suggested that there was insufficient time in class to actually complete the tasks so more time was needed outside the prescribed time for the subject.

Participant 2 did not give a definitive yes or no regarding effectively implementing the four key components but pointed out that *“there’s certain aspects I feel is being neglected”* from these components. This is especially since she is using two main resources - a ‘Blue Book’ from the DoE, and another resource which are alternated every week: *“So if you using the Blue Book and a text book it’s hard to implement both.”*

Participant 4 gave a conclusive answer about the implementation of the key components by stating that *“I try by all means but most of the time it’s not possible... I feel like there’s just too much to cover.”*

While Participants 1, 2 and 4 placed emphasis on the content itself, Participants 5 and 6 comments were more learner centred. Participant 5 clearly answered *“Definitely not”* in response to the discussion on her experience in implementing the key components in the two-week cycle and substantiated that:

*Far too much in the prescribed CAPS book from the department for the kids to cover because even though we give it to them in class and for homework, we've also got to supplement that work as well to facilitate their understanding.*

Lastly, Participant 6 light heartedly jested *"I don't think by any teacher in any Grade even from Grade one, never"* when she referred to covering all content within the prescribed time frames. Participant 6 further explained that in an English lesson on a writing activity for example *"you get one lesson for preparation of the topic... next you doing your final presentation which I don't think for a nine-year old, that's sufficient time."*

Thijs and Akker (2009) indicated that the success of any curriculum is influenced by the way it was intended and the way it is implemented. The participants' explanations of curriculum implementation showed the inconsistencies of teachers in implementing what is intended by the policy. This phenomenon attests to the need for this research study to acquire a different perspective of other teachers' experiences. The data revealed that the disjoint between the first two curriculum levels poses a challenge to teachers and this experience also shared by the researcher hence the exploration of this study.

#### **4.4.2.2 Challenges with teaching English Home Language curriculum to second language learners**

The theme in this sub section looks at the challenges EHL teachers' face in teaching second language learners. In the transition from the apartheid curriculum to the post-apartheid curriculum, (Msila, 2005) noted that there was a migration of Black learners to English medium schools. Noting this increase, (Makoe & McKinney, 2014) assert that the hegemony of English as a language that will give access to economic prosperity and other opportunities, often influences second language English speaking parents to send their children to these schools for 'quality education'. Participant 2 related to the fact that *"most of the children will come from a township school to an urban school because they want to be exposed to English."* A common challenge arises, as in the cases (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013) found, that children are left in the care of their grandparents who cannot assist or interact in English because culturally they speak isiZulu at home. Hence, there is poor performance in reading and comprehension in English as Participant 3 verified:

*I think due to the diversity of learners, the different demographics at our school, teaching English Home Language can be challenging. For example, Zulu speaking learners, you can actually tell the difference, they face more challenges even when completing a formal task.*

The data reveals several challenges of second language learners' with English. Participant 2 added, *"There is a huge challenge when it comes to English"* and Participant 1 concurred, *"we have our group that needs lots of assistance"*.

Furthermore, due to the length of the participants' answers in Table 5 below, a smaller scale analysis over and above analysing all the transcripts was undertaken. Drawing from (Vithal & Jansen, 2012), the answers were initially transcribed verbatim, then the process of scanning and organising the data to extract common themes was followed by the researcher. These findings are summarised in Table 5 below, and represent the common challenges of participants in teaching EHL.

**Table 5: Challenges experienced in participants' contexts**

<b>Challenges of participants in context</b>	<b>Commonalities of challenges experienced by participants</b>
Poor reading and comprehension	<p><i>Participant 1: They have difficulty with reading and comprehension.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 2: There are certain aspects in comprehension and language because the learners tend to write and spell how they speak sometimes it doesn't really make sense because English is not their first language.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 3: They don't read and they don't go to the library.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 4: Children do not know how to read and they don't know how to spell.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 5: So, because they don't know how to read they struggle when it comes to comprehension, understanding little passages that they get.</i></p>

**Table 5 (continued): Challenges experienced in participants' contexts**

<b>Challenges of participants in context</b>	<b>Commonalities experienced by participants</b>
Difficulty with essay writing and sentence construction	<p><i>Participant 1: In Grade Three, they weren't used to doing essays so now they have a problem of how to form an essay.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 2: Sentence construction is a huge problem. We take for granted you start with a Capital letter, you end with a full stop, it never happens.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 3: They find it very difficult to write out answers, grammatically construct the language and express themselves.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 4: You can have a verbal assessment, ask the child a question and they'll answer it but when it's time for them to read it on their own and actually write it, then it becomes a problem.</i></p>
Language as a barrier to learning	<p><i>Participant 2: If you tell them something verbally they are able to tell you the entire story but if you give them the same thing on a page and tell them this is what I've said, read it and sift out the answers, they are unable to do that.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 5: Even with regard to giving them a sentence, it has to be simple sentences because if it is a very complex sentence, they tend to get a bit confused.</i></p> <p><i>Participant 6: In our school the language barrier is a problem... we don't encourage them to speak Zulu because it's an English medium school. Only speak Zulu during your Zulu lesson although it is difficult, it is their mother tongue so we don't really succeed in that.</i></p>

The challenges presented in Table 5 above were categorised to show the challenges of teachers' implementing the EHL curriculum in regards to what the learners were battling in. The second heading Commonalities experienced by participants, referred to the participants that experienced the same challenges in their respective contexts. For example, Participants 1 to 5 all identified the same problem with learners having difficulty in reading and comprehension. However, the challenges listed in Table 5 above are not isolated, they are interrelated; if language is an impediment to learning, then reading and comprehension will become a problem



impacting on the ability to construct sentences or express themselves in writing. As Participant 4 mentioned, *“there’s a gap somewhere. It’s not that they don’t know, it’s the reading and the spelling that hinders on their marks”*. Judging by the responses, all participants, except Participant 1, addressed language as a challenge as she could speak fluent isiZulu. For teachers’ who are able to communicate in their learners’ mother tongue, this is advantageous, but for those who are not very skilled, it may cause a breakdown in communication between the teacher and the learner (Enever & British, 2011).

Copland, Garton, and Burns (2014) global study across five continents on English Language teaching concluded that among the challenges, a main one was the teaching of writing and grammar. While Table 5 discussed the challenges learners faced in EHL, in the analysis of the participants’ responses to these challenges above one can sense the frustrations teachers’ experience in EHL implementation with the basic foundation of reading and comprehension lacking, which is not only key for English but every other subject as well.

#### **4.4.2.3 Participants utilisation of materials and resources in EHL**

Materials and resources which are components of the Implemented curriculum are analysed in this section. Effective implementation of a curriculum requires appropriately aligned materials and resources and this component is part of the operational aspect of the implemented curriculum (Van den Akker et al., 2010). The EHL text book commonly referred to as the *‘Blue Book’* because of its blue cover is given by the DoE and used by all the participants however, the participants’ supplementary resources differ slightly. Some examples of supplementary resources included the internet like E-Classroom website ([e-classroom.co.za](http://e-classroom.co.za)), which was the first digital platform of educational resources launched in South Africa to promote quality education.

Participant 3 made particular reference to e-classroom as a resource *“where we download additional worksheets and tasks for the learners”* and Participant 5 also added *“I get lots of my resources from e-classroom”*. On the other hand, Participants 1, 4 and 6 did not specify which websites were helpful to them but suggested that they made use of alternatives. Although all participants confirmed that they had accessible resources, a concern that emerged from Participant 5 was she had *“to supplement [Activities] because lots of our children are not on the level that is prescribed”*, a concern expressed also by Participant 6:

*The textbooks don't cater for second language learners and the activities are not always suitable for them. We need to simplify it so you can't just use CAPS prescribed textbooks, you have to use other resources to get them to understand the concept too.*

Participant 2's reply did not mention the internet as a resource but she relied on more 'traditional' methods such as formulating worksheets using text books without the use of the internet.

*Participant 2: Sometimes we make our own worksheets and support that with homework booklets. I made an English and a Maths homework booklet. Same things from the textbook, they can take it home and go through it.*

The participants acknowledged that they had no problem in accessing sufficient resources and proactively compiled worksheets and booklets to accompany what the DoE had distributed. However, the additional resources that participants sourced in order to supplement their materials was needed to help their learners develop core skills to attain the outcomes since the content in the DoE 'blue book' did not fully cater to the needs of the learners. The attainment of these outcomes which is the third level of curriculum is discussed hereafter.

#### **4.4.3 Attained curriculum: Teachers' experiences of attaining EHL curriculum outcomes**

The last curriculum level to be discussed, is the Attained curriculum. The degree to which the intended learning outcomes or targets have been achieved is known as the Attained curriculum (Chalchisa, 2014). One of the ways to measure if the desired outcomes in the curriculum have been attained is through assessments. According to (Chalchisa, 2014, p. 102) "assessments is a process for obtaining information in curriculum operation in order to make decisions about student learning, curriculum and programmes, and on education policy matters." This infers that assessments are perceived as positive tools to enhance the educational experience. Under the ensuing sub headings, teachers' experiences of managing teaching and learning will be explained and if they are in fact attaining the desired outcomes will be explored. Further, the quality of work produced by teachers and learners will be analysed since it is vital that the outcomes are achieved, but at what cost?

#### 4.4.3.1 EHL Teachers' time management of the teaching and learning process

This section explores how the participants managed their time given the adjustments from the Foundation phase, to the Intermediate phase, and the new routine of having added subjects which brings multiplied content. Pretorius (2014, p.53) described the transition from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase as moving from “learning to read to reading to learn”. Participants were asked how they managed the teaching and learning process considering there were nine assessments per term besides the other content in the EHL curriculum. An analysis of what the participants' experiences were begins with Participant 1 who focused on “*in depth*” and “*a lot*” of homework because she stated “*whatever I covered for the week is done in their homework.*” Participant 1 placed emphasis on homework so she:

*knows where they having a problem, then I give that extra lesson to them which is my intervention 7.30 am and I'm usually here at 6.25 am.*

From Participant 1's comments, one can deduce that homework and intervention was an absolute in order to cover all curriculum requirements and were done outside the contact teaching time. In addition, she admitted:

*I do all my work out of school. All my admin, preps, extra work, marking, everything I just print it and I run out here. I don't use my teaching time so I don't have a life.*

The admission by Participant 1 about having to complete her work in her own time may not be unique. The researcher in this study can identify with this since anecdotal evidence of implementing the curriculum consumes the bulk of the allocated teaching time leaving no room during school time for things like lesson preparation, setting of assessments and marking to name a few. Participant 5 agreed with Participant 1 about time limitations in her response “*It does become very difficult because we only have so many hours in the day*” and then went on to describe her teaching strategy:

*Participant 5: I teach the concepts and give them their written exercises to complete. I mark it immediately and we do corrections and from there I can see whether the children have grasped it or not. If they haven't, I would have to re- teach it before moving on to any new lessons.*

In Participant 4's opening statement she begins with the words "*As much as there is not enough time...*" and then goes on to clarify how she manages the process of teaching and learning by giving a breakdown of her routine in the restricted time that she has:

*We'll have a class activity, work through it together, then they'll do some on their own and I use the English Blue Books and a homework book to reinforce whatever we did in class that day. Then we'll do group marking on the board orally, that's how we can save time. When we do assessments, I mark it, give it back to them and then put corrections on the board and work through it. If there's still children who are battling, I especially have to take time during break to re-assess. So we can get them to catch up.*

The responses above denoted that time was of concern which points back to the sub question (Van den Akker et al., 2010) if there is enough time to spend on specific tasks? From the data presented, time is also a challenge in terms of the practical implementation of the EHL curriculum. Therefore, the following section looks at solutions for this challenge.

#### **4.4.3.2 Teachers' solutions for covering the EHL curriculum outside of the prescribed teaching time frames**

As a result of the prescribed EHL curriculum having excess content in teachers' experiences, extra time outside of the contact teaching time at school is necessary and this section looks at alternatives in completing the syllabus. Homework in many cases goes hand in hand with parental involvement and this has been emphasised by the participants' above. Participant 6 provided an optimistic response by sharing "*we basically have to find the time to make sure that all the concepts are covered, all your assessments, corrections is done*" and the emphasis on parental involvement comes across strongly in Participant 6's response:

*We try to get parent involvement as well because there's not enough time in the curriculum for us to revise a section. Hence, we do a revision booklet, where we summarise each aspect of the English curriculum hoping that the parents can help... cover that gap.*

The demographics of learners from participating schools indicated that the vast majority of learners are isiZulu speaking. Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) claimed that parents are sometimes unable to assist due to their absence and learners reside with grandparents who are semi or illiterate as we find with many isiZulu learners. A qualitative study by (Ndebele, 2015) was carried out in eight primary schools in Gauteng involving 600 parents ranging from different socio economic backgrounds. The inquiry centred around the degree of assistance provided to learners with supervision, checking and signing of homework. The research study also explored the availability of resources and the appropriateness of learners' residential learning environments. The findings showed that parents with a higher socio-economic status were more likely to be involved in their children's homework activities in contrast to parents from poorer socio-economic backgrounds. In this research study, learners from School A (4A) who come from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, that being a neighbouring squatter settlement also experienced this problem as Participant 2 explained "*we always have a problem. They will never do that homework at all.*" The argument that stemmed from Participant 2's comment was, are all parents really on board, in other words, are teachers getting the full support of parents in their respective contexts? The response from Participant 2 made one question the support of parents because with proper parental guidance such a comment is unwarranted. However, if one looks at Participant 1's comments about homework, "*I'm liaising with the parents so parents have to sign their homework. So they know Friday you got to give back,*" then it becomes a little bit confusing seeing that both participants belong to the same school (4A). In analysing the participants' responses thus far, it is clear that any added support be it from parents, homework or revision is helpful. However, seeing that time poses as a challenge the issue of quantity versus quality is brought up and the reduction in content screams for change.

In the next section, the participants' suggestions regarding these changes will be analysed.

#### **4.4.3.3 Teachers' experiences of quality as opposed to quantity regarding assessments**

The common theme occurring in this section is teachers' experiencing an overload of assessments in EHL which interferes with the effective implementation of the curriculum. The interview question asked was, "How are you managing the teaching and learning process in terms of assessments?" Participant 4 candidly expressed "*with what is prescribed for us to*

*do, I feel like the workload is a lot in terms of the number of tests and assessments that need to be done” and wondered “if they can make it less because there’s a lot...”*

Such workload can be counter-productive to the quality of teaching and learning. Pinar (2012) asserts that as long as the content for assessments are covered, the purpose for teaching becomes ‘mechanical’, disregarding learners’ understanding. Participant 5 hinted that this situation forces her to teach only what is required in preparation for the upcoming assessments - *“we teach to assess because there is so much work and assessments to be covered”* - thus, this occurs at the expense of other prescribed content and the learners’ grasp of that content.

*Participant 5: We are not working on the kids understanding. So sometimes we need to re teach a lesson so that the kids understand it. What happens is that something else that we supposed to have taught, we will not cover. As long as we are covering what needs to be in that assessment that is what we tend to do.*

Participant 1 also echoed that *“the assessments are a lot, ten assessments for a term”* but rationalised,

*“that makes it difficult but we wouldn’t give ten assessments one time. It gets broken up, easy for the child as well, the exams are just written on that particular day.”*

The teacher claimed that there were ten assessments in a ten-week term and implied that these were too many. In addition, there are approximately forty learners per class, so a calculation makes this equivalent to four hundred assessments to mark for the term in English, excluding the other five subjects which are all taught by each participant.

*“Less assessments need to be given but quality instead of quantity”,* is what Participant 2 advocated by arguing that by reducing the number of assessments *“you know, by these four assessments, this child can either do it or not than giving ten and they failing”*. Participant 2 further disclosed that *“learners are bombarded from all sides with all these different aspects”* and the question that is asked is *“what are they going to remember and what are they going to forget?”* She observed that learners also *“struggle for Maths because they can’t read what is required from them... the instructions”*. When asked what is done to help the learners who

struggle with English Participant 2, stated *“I read everything, I even read the Maths paper for them before they start, I read the English.”*

One may enquire about the fairness of this practice, and whether this is really helping the learners, but given the circumstances, it appears that EHL teachers have limited alternatives to help their learners succeed.

Participant 3 echoed what was said by Participant 2, and justified her role in trying to *“contextualise and simplify assessments as much as possible”* just to attain the pass requirements:

*Participant 3: Especially bearing in mind that the child’s actual passing and failing at the end of the year or each term is dependent on whether the child passes or fails English.*

Participant 3 who referred to *“the different type of learners”* which largely comprised second language English learners also demonstrated a responsibility towards helping them *“because they have to achieve at least 50%.”*

Participant 6, who had the longest years of English teaching experience, summarised what all the other participants said about the quantity of assessments:

*Assessments, definitely I don’t think nine in a ten week cycle for a Grade Four level, nine year old child who is entering the Intermediate Phase where they now suddenly introduced to a variety of learning areas as opposed to just three in the Foundation Phase. Nine is just too much and again, we throwing a whole lot of assessments at them and expecting them to do well but I will probably bring it down to maybe five.*

Participant 6 also made reference to the transition from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase and commented that the adjustment is very vast and the expectations are too high. In addressing the challenge of quality, (Berkvens et al., 2014, p. 26) articulated that ongoing measurement of learning places intense pressure on learners and teachers and that assessments should support learning not disrupt it. The suggestion from the participants, that besides simplifying assessments, it was also necessary to reduce its number thereby making it manageable for the

learners and practical for the teachers, so that teachers would not be so rushed to complete expected work at any cost.

#### **4.4.4 Class based teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum**

The transition from one phase to another has been a recurring theme in this study. Changes such as the increase in subjects, content of materials, the number of assessments etc. differ quite drastically from Grade three to Grade four. This section analyses the teachers' responses of being class based and its impact on implementing the EHL curriculum. Being class-based means that a teacher remains in one classroom and will teach all the subjects in that class rather than specialising in certain subjects across the Grade, and moving from class to class.

The three participating schools had opted for being class based and teaching all six subjects instead of subject teaching within their scope of expertise. The participants all reached consensus that being class based was a more viable option and decided to make a change at the beginning of 2018. An advantage of this move for Participant 1 was stricter discipline *"when you class based, they know the teacher is there, they can't misbehave"*. She felt that there was better class control since the teacher was present at all times rather than subject teaching where the class would be intermittently unsupervised during the changeover which often caused a disruption. Participant 1 concluded *"I like class based teaching. I don't mind teaching all those subjects."*

Participant 3 also considered being class based advantageous like the first participant in that *"it actually helps because I can concentrate more on the English on one day and maybe carry it over... it doesn't really restrict me"* implying that it allows a little leniency to carry over work that has not been completed.

Participant 2 emphasised the struggle that learners face concerning time management in a class based environment, *"I find it very difficult when they come from Grade Three to Grade Four because it's the second year I'm teaching Grade Four so I've noticed it's a cycle"*. In her opinion she felt that learners are oblivious to the volume of work in relation to the stipulated time which is a concern for the EHL curriculum.



*Participant 2: They feel they have the entire day to do English. Now that we classroom based, it's even worse because they think the teacher is here the entire day so we have the whole day not thinking that they have SS, Life Skills, Maths, English and IsiZulu, so they'll sit.*

Being accustomed to only three subjects in Grade three makes the adjustment challenging in the new phase which also puts a strain on teachers to complete the syllabus. However, from the participants' responses about the volume of content in the EHL curriculum, it will be interesting to analyse if 'stealing' time from other subjects is practical. Under the next sub heading teachers' experiences of covering all content in a specified time frame will be looked at.

#### **4.4.4.1 Mixed reactions from teachers regarding time frames for the EHL curriculum**

In this section, the teachers' experiences of completing the EHL curriculum within specified time frames is analysed. While participants' preferred class based teaching, it was not necessarily very helpful in completing the EHL curriculum content as Participant 2 stated *"every week is prescribed whether it's English, [Natural Science, Social Science], so your things really need to be done within a certain frame of time"* since each subject has its own allocation. Coincidentally, Participant 1 commented *"It's impossible to steal time because the workload is a lot"* and Participant 2 belonging to the same school agreed *"we don't really steal from other subjects"*. Additionally, their work was monitored weekly, *"our HOD's check it every Monday"* holding them accountable which was not spoken about by other participants. Another way in which Participant 2 utilised her time effectively was by using the homework booklet:

*Whatever I do not cover, I explain it so they know what's happening, then they go home and do it. So the next day, my work is covered with that booklet so you not stealing from another subject.*

While the responses above by Participants 1 and 2 allude to work not carried over, the responses below are indicative of the similarity shared by the others in carrying over incomplete work. Participant 3 says *"I can carry it over"* and Participant 4 concurs *"I can steal time and that's the only way it works out, but if I was to rotate [teach one subject, EHL across Grade 4], then*

*I would have a problem". Participant 6 just honestly states, "we not supposed to but in English and Maths, we steal a lot of time from the other areas."*

Four of the six participants acknowledged that there was an overlap between subjects when needs be. Participant 5 showed the reality of having to carry over her lesson in her explanation:

*Sometimes if you break what you are teaching if the period ends, you can't just stop and move on. You need to complete it so that the children can get their understanding of it. So you might move into another time allocation for another subject.*

What came across pertaining to time is that participants who 'steal' time from other subjects are pressurised to repay that time at a later stage as Participant 3 suggested *"that's obviously going to be undue pressure on me because somehow I have to cover everything. So somehow I have to get it done"*. The alternative would be to reduce the content in the other subjects to accommodate the shortfall as Participant 5 expressed, *"In each subject the curriculum is vast so even though I might take from a certain subject, I would have to give back to that subject at a later stage"*. The perception underlying the participants' responses about covering the syllabus is that there is too much content in EHL and in order to complete it, other subjects are also affected and this is appropriately unpacked by Participant 6 in her response:

*We manage to cover it, maybe not to its full potential that we should for example with Natural Science we would probably take a period where you supposed to be doing a practical and if you had to do five practicals in the week, you'd probably do one or two instead because you stealing that time.*

The Tylerian approach (Tyler, 2013) endorsed a clearly structured curriculum programme which resonates with the CAPS curriculum in its endeavour to provide a systematic plan however, this becomes demanding on account of the prescribed workload. Therefore, in order for EHL teachers to complete the syllabus, other measures such as homework booklets and parental involvement also form part of the equation. Also, the fact that learners are just beginning to adapt in a new phase compounds the issue. Therefore, we will look at the possibilities for change brought to light by the participants next.

## 4.5 Possibilities for change in English Home Language

The theme in this section deals with the participants suggestions for change in the EHL curriculum. The question put forward to the participants was, “If you had to change anything about the EHL curriculum, what changes would you make and why?” Participants touched on certain points that affected them contextually and what they felt was needed to alleviate these challenges. Each participant offered differing perspectives on what changes they would make based on their teaching experiences such as proper curriculum training, catering for the diversity of learners, more emphasis on reading and reducing the EHL curriculum content.

Participant 2 referred to the foundation or building blocks of teaching which is training. She experienced improper training first hand complaining that *“we had training where the department sends you, it was done by normal level one teachers [teachers who did not hold any management positions]. They told me what was in CAPS”*. When Participant 2 started teaching EHL in a primary school she stated *“I had to train myself”* and requested *“as English teachers we need support”*. Spaul (2015) criticised the government for its lack of support concerning teachers which was also of concern to Participant 2 in her observation, *“I know I will read CAPS but, not everybody is going to do that. I’ve seen it personally”*.

On the other hand, Participant 3 noted *“as much as we appreciate the guidelines, but it’s far too general”*. She felt that the guidelines in the curriculum *“doesn’t really take into account different contexts and different learners or different languages spoken.”* So Participant 3 proposed that *“the changes should be directed to the CAPS document itself”* that is the Intended curriculum policy.

The mismatch especially among South African second language learners having to learn English as a Home language contributes to the load teachers must carry in trying to produce the pass requirements. Spuall (2015) proposed a national reading campaign to equip learners at a foundational level with basic literacy skills and in so doing, increase their performance later on, which points to the Attainment of curriculum outcomes. The consequence for the Grade four teacher then would not be so demanding since learners would have mastered the basics of “learning to read” in English in the Foundation Phase. Participants 4 and 5 reiterated the importance of reading. Participant 4 suggested a specific time allocation for reading apart from the daily activities.

*Participant 4: I would allocate more time for reading even if it's an hour a day. The hours that we have for the English is for whatever's in CAPS that we have to do. It's straight into the work and into assessments.*

Participant 5 recalled that in the Foundation Phase there was a concentrated endeavour in reading development, *"in the lower standards there used to be group work with regard to reading. That stops completely in Grade Four. It's a total change so that still needs to be implemented"*.

Participant 6 raised a valid case regarding building on the previous content as the learner progresses through the grades. Instead of throwing a plethora of concepts which robs teachers of revision and remedial time, she recommended introducing fewer concepts so that learners can fully grasp it possessing full knowledge before moving on. Considering that less concepts will be solidly taught, this reasonable request would enable the weaker learners to absorb better and minimise the pressure on teachers. Participant 6's suggestion was:

*I would make the language structure not so in depth. Touch on the main concepts and leave room for revision and remedial so that the concepts in Grade Four are solidly taught, they have a full background knowledge of it before moving to Grade Five and then build on that but not introduce them for example to all the variety of nouns or verbs. There's too many. So break it down, let them know the basics. It's just a volume of knowledge that's thrown on them. Those that are naturally capable of absorbing fast gain, those that don't just fall by the wayside hence, our poor results.*

Participants' shared their suggestions about what they thought would make a difference in their teaching experiences. The data suggested that teachers required basic things like proper training or the minimising of curriculum content to cater for the needs of learners. These suggestions from the teachers were not unrealistic nor were they impossible to implement. If these practical ideas discussed in this section by the participants are formally implemented, then could we achieve the success we as EHL teachers so earnestly strive for in terms of better understanding for second language learners and better results in turn.

## 4.6 Conclusion

The rationale for curriculum change was welcomed by teachers' given the past curricula revisions short comings. All participants agreed that the CAPS policy was explicit in its prescriptions but experienced challenges with its implementation in their contexts. The data analysis revealed that the similarities shared by the participants far outweighed the differences. Participants were forthcoming about their challenges as Grade four English Home Language teachers, especially in implementing the curriculum where the learners are second language English speakers transitioning from the Foundation Phase to the Intermediate Phase. The conceptual framework used in this study tabulated three levels of curriculum namely, Intended, Implemented and Attained which are interconnected with the ten components in the Curricula Spider Web (Van den Akker, Fasoglio, & Mulder, 2010). The three levels of curriculum played a significant role in exploring the participants' experiences of implementing what was intended and attaining those curriculum goals. Foregrounded in this chapter was the participants' dedication in helping their learners overcome their challenges and succeed. The data suggested initiatives which included formulating homework booklets, interventions, sacrificing lunch breaks even simplifying assessments in order to attain the curriculum goals as per the curriculum's requirements. However, the quality of the implementation proved to be short-changed in the participants' compulsion to complete the EHL curriculum resulting in both teachers and learners being overwhelmed. The last chapter summarises the key elements or emerging themes from Chapter 4 and then looks at recommendations for this study as well as further studies.

## **CHAPTER 5: Summary and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 presented and analysed rich data in response to the research question: What are teachers' experiences of implementing the English Home Language Curriculum in Grade four? This chapter provides an overview of the study. Thereafter, the conceptual framework and themes emerging from Chapter 4 using the Curricula Spider Web with its three curriculum levels (Berkvens et al., 2014) is reiterated. This is followed by recommendations of the study and suggestions on further studies that can be explored.

### **5.2 Overview of the study**

#### **5.2.1 Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study**

Chapter 1 outlined a background of the study through a brief introduction about curriculum transformation. The focus of the study was to explore Grade four teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum and from this focal point, the study was presented. The aim of this chapter was to provide a synopsis of the study and the rationale for the research undertaking. An annotated literature review summarised the context of the study and alluded to the gap in the research on Grade four teachers' experiences in implementation of the EHL curriculum. The location of the study which described the context of participating schools led to the purpose of the study. Research methods employed such as case study, data collection and data analysis were brought in as well as ethical considerations were discussed.

#### **5.2.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Transformative changes in the government post-apartheid resulted in changes in various English curricula and its impact on teachers was examined in this chapter. Insights into teachers' experiences in implementing the present English Home Language Curriculum under CAPS in different contexts was discussed. International and national studies were explored exposing similarities and differences of English teachers' experiences, which again highlighted a dearth of research on this topic. The Curricula Spider Web which contextually originated in the Netherlands was used to compare South Africa's curriculum restrictions to the Netherlands

curriculum freedoms. The conceptual framework of the Curricula Spider Web which integrates the three curriculum levels underpinning the study was explained to demonstrate how the Intended, Implemented and Attained curriculum levels influenced teachers' experiences of EHL in Grade four.

### **5.2.3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Chapter 3 provided an outline of the qualitative research design and case study methodology employed in this study. The paradigms chosen were Interpretivist and Constructivist which are commonly used in qualitative studies to explore the phenomenon from the participants' understandings thereof. Case study methodology is an exploratory tool used by the researcher in this study to analytically probe participants to glean data. Data collection methods using semi-structured interviews, sampling, data collection procedures and data analysis were outlined. Trustworthiness, Ethics and Limitations & Delimitations were also detailed in this chapter.

### **5.2.4 Chapter 4: Analysis of Data**

Key questions adapted from the Curricula Spider Web were asked during the interviews to answer the research question. Some of these questions included an account of the highlights or challenges experienced in EHL more specifically focussing on curriculum policy, implementation and outcomes. These themes were linked to the Intended, Implemented and Attained curriculum levels of the Curricula Spider Web in the Conceptual Framework and used as a lens to analyse the data. The participants' responses through their lived experiences were explicated in this chapter and the data collected was analysed to reveal common themes such as content overload in EHL and restricted time frames. Data further revealed that both teachers and learners were negatively impacted on by curriculum's expectations. Literature was juxtaposed to further understand the findings of the participants' responses.

## **5.3 Summary of findings**

This section provides a summary of the findings presented in Chapter 4. Semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher revealed Grade four teachers' experiences of the CAPS curriculum through what is intended, how it is implemented and what is attained. These

concepts were described by (Van den Akker et al., 2010) as the three levels of curriculum associated with the Curricula Spider Web (Berkvens et al., 2014). The components attached to these three levels will be elaborated on hereafter in order to summarise the findings from Chapter 4.

### **5.3.1 Teachers' experiences of the intended EHL curriculum policy**

This level of curriculum comprised Rationale, Aims & Objectives and Content. Participants were questioned about the highlights regarding the curriculum and all agreed that CAPS was explicitly clear in terms of its directives. The Aims and objectives with regard to Content were clearly defined by way of a detailed schedule and this was to be implemented by all teachers nationally regardless of context. While the prescriptions of the policy is clear, participants noted that the implementation of the EHL curriculum policy itself was a challenge since the EHL curriculum was too vast and participants were teaching second language learners.

### **5.3.2 Teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum**

The Implemented curriculum which included Learning activities, Teacher role, and Materials and resources were the central themes in the research study. All participants concurred that they had adequate resources such as the internet, text books etc. which is not the case in many schools in South Africa as (Modisaotsile, 2012) identified. However, learning activities as expressed by the participants had to be simplified to appropriately cater for the learners within the participants' classes adding to the work load. The teachers role looked at how teachers managed the teaching and learning process specifically in respect of the four key components in EHL namely Listening and speaking, Reading and viewing, Writing and presenting, Language structures and conventions. The extensive content in the EHL curriculum, poor reading and comprehension skills of learners due to the language barrier, coupled with the transition that the learners were faced with were some of the challenges that surfaced in the analysis. The frustrations of participants was evident as teachers were expected to complete the syllabus while persevering through all the challenges which only made the gap between the first two curriculum levels more apparent. Besides covering the four key components in the EHL curriculum within the two-week cycle, the measurement of outcomes had to be assessed and this will be discussed in the next section.



### **5.3.3 Teachers' experiences of attaining EHL curriculum outcomes**

In Grade four there are nine compulsory EHL assessments per term. Assessments are not only necessary to gauge the learners' progress but is also recorded on a national data base called the South African Management and Administration Systems and is monitored by the DoE. Due to the number of assessments required for EHL teachers to administer, participants were questioned about their experiences concerning assessments. One of the themes was quantity, in contrast to quality, which was an overwhelming challenge for both teachers and learners alike. Data revealed that second language learners grappled with foundational skills like reading, comprehension and sentence construction. Through discussing their experiences, the participants also offered possible solutions to minimise some of the challenges they were facing. Below are some of the participants' recommendations.

### **5.4 Recommendations for the study**

Recommendations for this study was derived from participants' response to the question about changes they would make to the EHL curriculum regarding its intention, implementation and attainment of curriculum goals. These recommendations are structured according to the three curriculum levels and discussed in this section.

The pivotal setback in the implementation process seemed to stem from the challenges that retarded teachers' progress due to the intended EHL policy. As part of the changes regarding Intended curriculum, participants recommended beginning with proper training on curriculum requirements and ongoing Professional development for EHL teachers. Additional support from subject advisors such as liaising on EHL curriculum issues was also put forward. Without these basic foundations in place, teachers could have different interpretations on how to implement the curriculum. With the Implemented curriculum, participants suggested gradual progression of content, especially in English, between the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase. Another recommendation to help learners make the transition, was to use fewer concepts in Language to allow for understanding and mastery in addition to more emphasis on reading to develop their proficiency in EHL. Lastly, the recommendation for the Attained curriculum level was to minimise the number of assessments to cater for second language learners since the study revealed that learners were challenged with basic language skills like

reading and comprehension. The recommendations by participants gave rise to the researcher contemplating suggestions for further studies.

### **5.5 Suggestions for further studies**

In undertaking this study, the fact that there was so much more to explore became quite evident. Researching Teachers' experiences provides an interesting study, because it is only through systematic study that the realities of teaching within diverse contexts is uncovered. The research topic in this study was very specific in terms of Teachers' experiences of implementing the EHL curriculum in Grade four. Suggestions for further research could include:

- Teachers' perceptions of the English Home Language curriculum policy. In other words, what do EHL teachers think about EHL policy's expectations from their engagement with it.
- Teaching English Home Language to second language learners. How effectively EHL teachers, especially monolingual teachers, teach second language learners in English.
- Teaching English Home Language in different contexts in South Africa. South Africa has such a diversity in schooling contexts from socio-economic backgrounds of learners to the accessibility of resources to qualifications of teachers to name a few. The teaching of EHL comparatively in these contexts could be an interesting topic for further exploration.
- Exploring the teaching of English in other grades or across an entire phase. This study focussed on Grade four because of the huge adjustment between the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase. Perhaps choosing another grade, like Grade 1 which sets the foundation for learning or Grade 8 where they are introduced to more complex literature could also provide other contexts for a research study.
- Wider scale exploration of the research topic using a larger sample as well as in different contexts. Since this study only selected six participants, having a larger sample may have provided the researcher with more experiences maybe different to the ones of participants in the study.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The concluding chapter presented an overview of the study and recalled the main ideas in each chapter. In this study, the critical research question: *What are English Teachers' experiences with implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade 4?*, has provided a deeper and richer understanding of the research phenomenon. Common themes emerging from the data analysis revealed challenges teachers' experience in implementing the English Home Language curriculum in Grade four. These challenges included having to implement an extensively prescribed EHL curriculum to mostly second language learners transitioning to a new phase, impacting on the quality of the teaching and learning experience.

Who better to offer workable solutions than the participants who experience these challenges first hand? Therefore, recommendations by the participants to improve the quality of the pedagogical experience were listed and suggestions for further studies based on the participants' recommendations was also noted by the researcher. The entire study was guided by the Curricula Spider Web which is used in research concerning curriculum issues and offers a holistic illustration in terms of the main components in curriculum development and the various levels to which it belongs. While the Intended, Implemented and Attained curriculum levels are meant to smoothly amalgamate into one another the glaring inconsistencies in the implementation of EHL in Grade four are evident in this study. Therefore, if these gaps are not addressed, teachers will continue to be overburdened, which will negatively impact on the teaching and learning experience in the classroom, the education goals for quality in South Africa will remain superficial, and learners' scholastic achievements will continue to deteriorate.

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